NOVEMBER 1953

COMMENTARY

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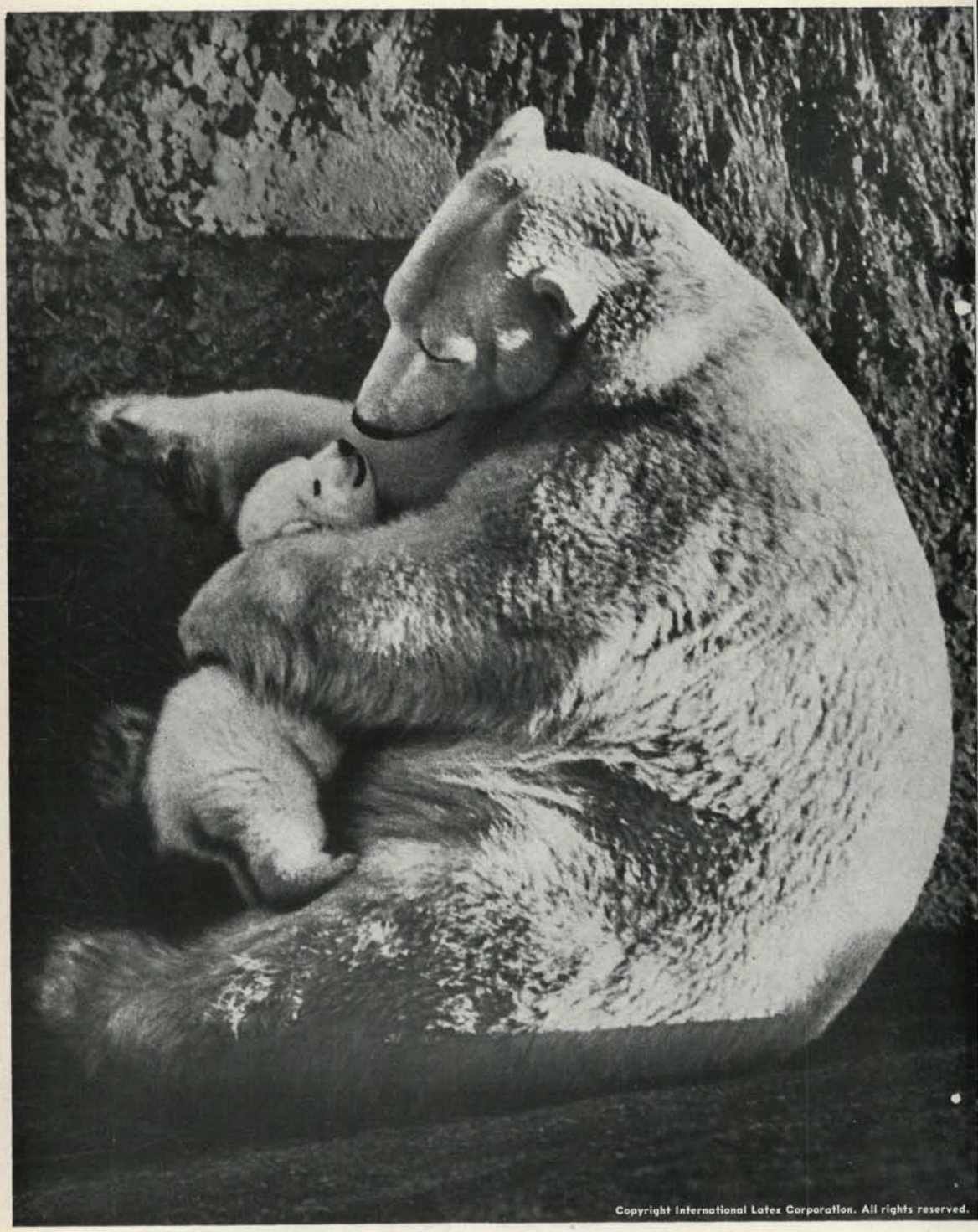

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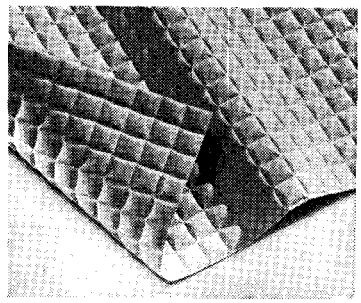

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

The Issue between Jew and Christian *Jacob Taubes*

The frequent invocation today of the term "Judeo-Christian tradition" — or "heritage," or "ethics" — and the writings of a number of contemporary Jewish theologians, have tended to obscure the fundamental differences Judaism has with Christianity. What is the real issue between Judaism and Christianity? Can the gap be bridged theologically?

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In the flood of short plays which go out every evening over the television networks, Mr. Podhoretz sees emerging a new kind of "everyday drama" that exhibits with some honesty the ways in which Americans actually handle the problems of their lives.

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The Burning of the Talmud in Paris *Allan Temko*

A dramatic reconstruction of the events that led up to the burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1242, in the days of Saint Louis and his mother Queen Blanche: the accusation of the apostate Donin of La Rochelle, the disputation with him by rabbinical scholars, the tragic outcome.

The New Germany: Reporter's Notebook *Hal Lehrman*

Mr. Lehrman was in Germany in the days following the revelations of the death camps. Back once more, he sends us his impressions of the new Germany with special reference to problems of Jewish interest.

Intergroup Relations: A New Science *Nathan Glazer*

"Race relations," "intergroup relations," "minority problems"—under one title or another, the problems of Negroes, Mexicans, Jews, and other actually or supposedly disadvantaged groups in American society are now being taught in hundreds of college and university courses. Mr. Glazer considers what is established and what is still shaky in the new discipline.

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COMMENTARY

CAN WE FREE EASTERN EUROPE NOW?

Why Neither Liberation nor Settlement Seems in Sight

HUGH SETON-WATSON

THE greatest political problem in Europe, which was open at the time of Stalin's death, remains open today. Even within its 1938 frontiers, the Soviet Union would be a formidable military and industrial power. But the conquest of 100 million East Europeans, together with the considerable economic resources of their countries, has increased Soviet war potential by more than half. Among the 100 million are nearly 20 million Germans. Having seized the lands between the Elbe and Western Russia—whose fate has been a principal cause of two world wars—the Soviet leaders aim to extend their empire over the whole of Germany. Should they succeed, Western Europe would be doomed, and the United States would be in mortal peril. If these disasters are to be avoided, then two supreme aims of Western policy must be kept constantly in sight. These are, firstly, to deny Moscow control over Germany, and secondly, to break Moscow's grip on Eastern Europe, and especially on its two economically and militarily most powerful countries—Poland and Czechoslovakia. The two aims are inseparable, but their achievement will be not only difficult but also complicated and long drawn out. There are no sudden miraculous solutions.

THERE have always been two alternative means to achieve the Soviet purpose of domination of Germany. One is to extend to the whole country the Stalinist regime established since 1946 under the puppets Ulbricht and Pieck. The other is to permit the creation of a truly united and independent Germany, and to make it an ally of the Soviet Union against the West.

In theory, the first alternative could be achieved in one of three ways—by force, by

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THE June 17 uprising in East Berlin, coupled with evidences of unrest in the satellites, seemed to many to open the possibility of loosening the Soviet Union's grip on Eastern Europe. Some saw it as an occasion to step up the crusade for liberation, others considered the USSR might be receptive to a negotiated settlement looking to withdrawal: a neutralized Germany, for example, plus a non-aggression pact with the West. Here HUGH SETON-WATSON examines these hopes in the light of hard realities and tells why he believes that, though any great change or "heroic solution" in the immediate future is unlikely, forces are working under the surface that may eventually put the liberation of Eastern Europe on the agenda of the day. Mr. Seton-Watson is professor of Russian history in the School of Slavonic Eastern European Studies of the University of London, and the author of several works on Eastern Europe and Russia, the most recent of which is *From Lenin to Malenkov* (Praeger). In May 1953 we published his article "The Colonial System of the USSR."

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propaganda, or by diplomatic maneuver. It has never seemed very likely that the Soviet government intended to wage war for the conquest of Germany. Since the failures of the Berlin blockade and North Korean-Chinese aggression, it has become almost inconceivable. The prospect that the German people would be converted to Stalinism by the example of the rhetoric of Ulbricht and Pieck is no brighter. The Soviet leaders may for a time have believed their own fantasies about the increasing misery in the Western zones, and the mounting enthusiasm of the toiling masses for the great "German Democratic Republic" in the East. But they have recently received two blows which must have shattered most of their illusions. The first was the revolt in Berlin, and other cities of the Eastern Zone, which clearly showed the hatred and contempt felt by the German people, and especially by the German workers, for the German Stalinists. The second was the electoral victory of Dr. Adenauer, which showed that the man whom Soviet propaganda had unceasingly denounced as an American agent and a traitor to Germany had greatly increased his popular support in the last years. Finally, the prospects of diplomatic maneuver are also small.

Public statements of Soviet policy pay lip service to the ideal of a united independent Germany. But it has always been clear that the only kind of united Germany that the Soviet government is willing to see is one in which the German Stalinists would from the start hold such strong positions that they could reasonably hope within a fairly short time to seize power. The Soviet tactic has been to secure a united German government roughly similar to the Czechoslovak government of 1945, from which in due course the Gottwald dictatorship of 1948 emerged. But it is by now abundantly clear that the Western powers would not fall for a maneuver of this sort. Still less would the West German politicians. Even the Social Democrats, who played with the notion of "neutralism," would not have considered it, much less Adenauer. And after his victory of September 6 Adenauer is a force to be reckoned with. The time when the German problem could be arranged without considering German wishes is past.

IF THEN the first alternative, the extension of a Stalinist regime to all Germany by force, by propaganda, or by diplomacy is ruled out, there remains the second, the creation of a united and independent Germany.

From the Soviet point of view this would be a gamble, the exchange of a concrete asset for a hope. Moscow would give up its direct control over the lives of 18 million Germans in the hope that the new united Germany would take the side of the Soviet Union against the West. It would be a big gamble for big stakes. There would be a risk that the whole of Germany would join the Western camp, and Soviet positions in Eastern Europe be imperiled. On the other hand, the many latent causes of friction between Germany and the West could be exploited by Soviet diplomacy, and great use could be made of the German desire to regain the lands lost to the Poles and Czechs.

As long as Stalin lived it was safe to assume that the gamble would not be made. Stalin's character did not work that way. He would not give up an asset for a hope. He recognized only two categories, slaves and enemies. He was capable of striking bargains with existing independent great powers, usually at the expense of third parties —with Ribbentrop in 1939, with Roosevelt and Churchill in 1945, in both cases at the expense of Poland. He was not capable of turning a satellite into an independent great power, in the hope that it would later become his ally. But when Stalin died all this became less certain. Perhaps the new men had more elastic minds. Perhaps a gamble on German unity and independence would prove, from the Soviet point of view, an act of statesmanship.

Whether this was seriously discussed, and whether it was the subject of a disagreement between Malenkov and Beria, or between Beria and the Soviet army, we cannot know today. But if it was considered, it was re-

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jected after the June revolt in Berlin. Much has been written of those stirring events from the point of view of revolutionary action within a totalitarian state—a subject of the greatest interest and importance. Rather less attention has been paid to their effect on Soviet policy towards Germany. Here two historical parallels may be of some help.

In March 1921 the sailors of Kronstadt rose against Lenin, with the sympathy of a large part of the workers of Petrograd. The mutineers' demands were less economic than political. They accepted the revolution, but demanded an end to the Bolshevik party's dictatorship, and freedom of political choice for workers and peasants. Lenin never considered political concessions. He chose to denounce the mutiny as a plot by "White Guardists," and suppressed it bloodily. After suppressing it he introduced economic concessions, while at the same time increasing the political stranglehold of the Bolshevik party on all sectors of public life. Similarly in Berlin in 1953 the uprising was made by the workers, and its demands were political —in essence, the removal of the Ulbricht-Pieck regime. Malenkov took the same line as Lenin in 1921. He chose to attribute the movement to "fascist provocation," and suppressed it bloodily. Then he introduced economic concessions, while building up the Ulbricht regime more strongly than ever. Recently, even the economic concessions have been partly abandoned. All the evidence suggests that Moscow, far from sacrificing its puppets, intends to use them even more ruthlessly than before to oppress the people of Eastern Germany.

The other historical parallel is nearly a hundred years old. When the uncompromising autocrat, Czar Nicholas I, died in 1855, his successor, Alexander II, embarked on a series of social and administrative reforms. These met with opposition from the reactionary elements in the bureaucracy, but the Czar and the more liberal bureaucrats for a time had things their way. In 1863 the Czar's Polish subjects, to whom he had made a number of concessions, rose in armed insurrection against him, and were defeated. The Polish revolt strengthened the influence of the reactionaries over the Czar, and discredited the liberals. Thereafter there was little more reform.*

Similarly in Berlin in 1953 the revolt followed a series of concessions. Its suppression was followed by a general stiffening of Soviet foreign policy, and by the disgrace of Beria, who seems to have stood for a more liberal policy, at least in the two very important fields of judicial reform and treatment of the non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union. The idea of taking a chance on the Germans, like the idea of taking a chance on the Poles before 1863, has been abandoned.

If Malenkov were seriously considering the formation of a united and genuinely independent Germany, he would not be bolstering up Ulbricht and Pieck. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Soviet government has decided against the gamble. If this is so, Germany will remain divided for some time yet. To Europeans this prospect is distasteful, to Germans it will seem unendurable. But they may have to endure it.

SECOND only, in German minds, to reunification of the Eastern zone with the Federal Republic is recovery of the lands lost in the East. Here a distinction may be made between the Polish and Czech territories. The land between the Oder-Neisse boundary and the 1939 frontier of Poland has been German for centuries. The Bohemian borderlands were part of Austria until 1918, and of the Czechoslovak Republic until 1938, when the Munich agreement, accepted by the four European great powers of the time, gave them to Germany. By his invasion of the purely Czech lands in 1939 Hitler himself broke the Munich agreement, and the Western Allies later stated that they considered Munich null and void. It may thus be argued that the German case for the return of the lands taken by Poland in 1945 is morally and legally stronger than the case

*Reforms for which the preparatory work had started before 1863 were completed after the Polish revolt. But no new reforms were initiated.

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for German recovery of the Bohemian borderlands, though more can be said for the claim of the Bohemian Germans to return to their homelands if these remain under Czech sovereignty. In practice, however, the distinction is of doubtful value. Moral and legal arguments can be found on all three sides, and to German nationalists, whether they be of Bohemian origin or not, the Sudetenland is as much "German soil" as are the Oder-Neisse provinces.

The expulsion of millions of Germans from these lands was an act of brutality and injustice, the last in a long chain of such acts. Hitler exterminated six million Poles (half of them Jews) and planned policies which would have resulted in the Germanization or starvation of millions more. Circumstances caused him to postpone the extermination of the Czechs but official documents show that he had decided in 1940 to Germanize half of them and to destroy the other half "by all sorts of methods."*

In 1945 the Soviet army and the Polish Communist regime expelled the Germans of the annexed territories, most of them persons innocent of crimes against Poles, under conditions which led to the death of very large numbers—though only a fraction of the Poles whom Germans had killed. In Czechoslovakia the sum total of death and misery inflicted by Czechs on the expelled Germans was greater than that which Czechs had themselves suffered at German hands, though much smaller than what Hitler had had in store for them. The Czech expulsion was more horrible than the Polish for two reasons. It was conducted, not in the midst of military operations, but in conditions of comparative stability, which made it more deliberately cruel, and it was the work, not of Soviet puppets, but of a government genuinely representing a majority of the Czech people. By acquiescing in the atrocities committed against Bohemian Germans, the Czech people, it must be said, stooped to the moral level of the German people which acquiesced in Hitler's crimes.

*See *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, Part 2, pp. 436-7.

The Western governments' acceptance of the annexations or expulsions was made subject to conditions which have not been fulfilled. They have never recognized the Oder-Neisse frontier as final. In the West the view is widespread that the settlement of 1945 will not be permanent. In principle the German expellees demand that they should return to their homes, and that the territories should be restored to Germany. They claim this as an absolute right. They talk as if no injustice had been committed by Germans against Poles and Czechs for which atonement was due. For their part the Poles and Czechs, whether Communist rulers or anti-Communist exiles, insist on the maintenance of the status quo.

An independent Western observer, seeking an objective opinion, would probably feel that neither of these extreme points of view is tenable. He would feel that Germany owes atonement to the Polish and Czech peoples, but that it is wrong that the whole burden should be borne by those Germans—many of them innocent and honorable persons—who happened to live in the provinces in question. The dead cannot be brought back to life, and the succession of massacre and counter-massacre must cease. The problem can only be treated when the peoples of Eastern Germany, Poland, and the Czech lands have chosen freely leaders who can negotiate in their peoples' names.

If ever it is treated, it will have to be on the basis of some sort of balance. Individual Germans who have not proved themselves to be enemies of the Poles and Czechs should be allowed to return to their homes. A portion of the annexed territories might be returned to Germany, but the size and location of this territory would depend on many factors—mainly demographic and economic—which cannot be foreseen. The longer the territories remain under Polish and Czech rule, the more favorable the balance would inevitably be to the Poles and Czechs. Another approach to the problem, not necessarily incompatible with the above, is the idea of a German-Polish con-

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dominium of the Oder-Neisse territories, recently suggested by Dr. Adenauer and denounced by spokesmen of the expellees. How this would work in practice it is hard to say. But that the German Chancellor can think in these terms is an encouraging sign. It is one more proof of his stature as a European statesman.

THOUGH these general observations must be made in order to set the problem in its perspective, they are at present somewhat academic. Is there in fact any prospect that the eastern frontier of Germany will be modified in the foreseeable future?

It is often suggested in the West that the Soviet Union can outbid the Western powers in the contest for German sympathies by offering to restore the eastern territories. The loss of these lands has certainly created hatred of Russia in Germany, but it has also made clear to many Germans the importance of an understanding with Russia. Prussia, it may be argued, was for generations a good friend of Russia. Many Germans hate Poles or Czechs more than they hate Bolsheviks, let alone the Russian nation. The five Partitions of Poland and the sacrifice of the Czechs to Hitler in 1939 offer precedents. And only Moscow can decide whether the eastern territories shall go back to Germany. This type of argument, very understandably from their point of view, is strongly pressed by Germans who seek to extract further favors from the United States.

To restore the lost territories to Germany would involve substantial losses to the Soviet Union. Firstly it would arouse the rage of the Polish and Czech peoples. Even under Stalinism this factor cannot be entirely ignored. Secondly, and perhaps more important, it would, by uprooting large populations, disorganize the whole industry of Poland and Czechoslovakia. The industrial output of these two most advanced of Moscow's satellites is already of substantial importance to the war economy of the Soviet Union. To make these losses worthwhile, Moscow would have to be sure of substantial gains. If she restored the territories to Ulbricht's puppet state, she would hardly win a single German thereby. The Ulbricht regime is so despised and detested since the revolt of June 1953 that nothing could restore its prestige in German eyes. The alternative would be to restore the territory to a united independent Germany. If such a Germany existed, the gamble might or might not be worthwhile. But it does not exist. We have given reasons above for the belief that Moscow will not, in the foreseeable future, consent to its creation.

Here again we have a deadlock. The prospects of German unity are at present small, and if Germany is neither reunited and independent, nor reunited under Ulbricht's rule, there will be no restoration of the eastern territories. At present the Soviet government cannot offer restoration, and if the Soviet government, which controls these lands, cannot restore them, there is no reason why the Western powers, which do not control them, should make empty promises to do so. Such promises would rally millions of Poles and Czechs behind Malenkov without winning for the West a single German not already on the Western side. The idea sometimes suggested in the West, that the Poles should be promised their eastern frontier of 1939 in return for restoring their western lands to Germany, is even more inept. Those Poles who wish their old eastern frontier—and there may be many of them—demand it as of right, not as compensation for loss (in the future) of the much more valuable lands in the West. But the inhabitants of the former eastern provinces of Poland are Ukrainians and White Russians, who are resolved not to be put back under Polish rule. To proclaim a policy of Yalta in reverse, as some Western writers would like, would merely increase support for Malenkov among the Russian, Ukrainian, White Russian, Polish, and Czech peoples, without winning a single new German supporter.

MEANWHILE Poland and Czechoslovakia are changing, and with them the annexed territories.

Poland and Czechoslovakia are becoming

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predominantly industrial countries. For the Polish economy the annexed territories are of vital importance. The industries that flourished when these provinces were German have been largely rebuilt, and new ones have been added. In Czechoslovakia, the industries of Bohemia have been further developed, and relatively still more progress has been made in Slovakia, whose economy was very backward until the war. It is not easy to obtain a clear picture of these economic changes. Not only official propaganda by the satellite regimes, but also Polish and Czech exiled sources stress the progress made, while German sources stress the failures and incompetence. The two sets of facts are not necessarily so contradictory as they seem. Soviet industrial progress under the Five Year Plans was marked by inefficiency and wastage of human and material resources on a scale barely credible but confirmed by reliable witnesses. Yet this progress was real. At appalling cost the Soviet leaders created vast new industries, and transformed Russia into the world's second industrial power. It would be prudent to assume that something of the same sort is taking place in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The methods are wasteful and cruel, but results are being achieved.

The expulsion of the Germans left great spaces empty. These are being gradually filled. Both western Poland and the Bohemian borderlands are still underpopulated —a point which German observers understandably stress. But the high Polish birth rate is making itself felt. The natural increase of population is much higher in Poland than in Western Germany. Every year that the present frontiers remain will make the balance of population more favorable to the Poles, less favorable to the Germans. This is much less true of Czechoslovakia. This country suffers from a severe labor shortage. The loss of three million Germans, with a high proportion of skilled workers, cannot be made up for a very long time. The surplus manpower of Slovakia, hitherto backward and overpopulated, does not compensate for it. Slovak workers in Bohemia are far fewer and far less skilled than the expelled Germans. As Slovakia itself becomes industrialized the surplus available for Bohemia will dwindle. On purely economic grounds there is a stronger case for the return of Germans to Bohemia than to western Poland.

THE new frontiers, the expulsions, and the industrialization of Poland and Czechoslovakia (including their more backward eastern provinces) are transforming not only the political but the economic geography of Europe. A Polish-Czech industrial region, with a population of nearly 40 million people, is emerging to the east of Germany. West European and American opinion is rightly impressed by the economic recovery of Western Germany. Within the western half of Europe, Germany is rapidly becoming the dominant power. German competition, within a world market reduced by the conquests of Stalinist imperialism, of course arouses anxiety in Britain and Western Europe. But within Europe as a whole, German predominance is and will be much less marked than it has been since the 1880's. This is a change which is likely to survive even the fall of Stalinism. It is one of the basic new facts about Europe of which students of international affairs must take account.

In the inter-war years Polish-Czech relations were usually bad. For this there were three main reasons. First, and probably least important, was the territorial dispute about Teschen. Second was the contrast between the devoutly Catholic Poles and the largely freethinking Czechs. Third was the mutual dislike of a Polish ruling class consisting of a bureaucracy with strong aristocratic and military traditions, and a Czech ruling class consisting of a bourgeoisie with a strongly democratic and civilian outlook. These three factors are disappearing. The territorial dispute is not important, and the increasing economic integration of Polish and Czech Silesia will remove it. In both countries the Catholic Church is stronger and more popular than ever. The fine record of Czech priests under German occupation did much

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to remove the anti-Catholic prejudices of the Czech educated class which survived from Hapsburg times. The resistance of the Czech Catholic Church to the Communist regime has still further raised its standing. In Poland, the Church has always been strong. Thus today Catholicism is a factor uniting Poles and Czechs, not separating them. Thirdly, the social development of both nations is increasingly similar. This deserves more attention than it usually gets.

Both countries are going through an intense industrial revolution. Industrial revolutions create certain dominant social types. This is strikingly shown by the experience of the Soviet Union. From the purely social point of view, the similarities between the private bourgeoisies created by the industrial revolution in Western Europe a hundred years ago, and the state bourgeoisie created by the Soviet industrial revolution since 1929, are more impressive than the difference between private capitalism and state ownership. In Poland before 1939 the bourgeoisie, which were partly private (or capitalist) and partly state (or bureaucratic), were in any case weak. In the Czech lands the bourgeoisie, which were capitalist, were very strong. Both these groups have been destroyed by the Communist regimes. Individual members of them have found a place in the new dominant group, the state bourgeoisie, whose ranks are being filled from below, from the working class and the peasantry. Thus the social factor, like the religious, unites rather than divides Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Social development is of course powerfully affected by political conditions. As in the Soviet Union, it is distorted by the totalitarian system of Stalinism. Here there is an important difference between the Soviet Union and the two satellites to the west. In Russia the growth of democratic forces before 1917 had been weak (though less weak than is often stated in the West); these forces had been suppressed by the victorious Bolsheviks; and the Stalinist system took twenty years to grow, being complete only at the end of the Yezhov purge of 1937-38. In Czechoslovakia democracy was extremely powerful up to 1938, and in Poland, where it was weaker, it was still a mighty force in comparison with pre-1917 Russia. In both countries, Stalinist totalitarianism was imposed ready-made. Thus today, the great majority of adult Poles and Czechs were mentally formed under a non-Communist regime. Even Communists in these countries think in different terms from their Soviet masters.

A characteristic of rising bourgeoisies is extreme nationalism. This is true of the British private bourgeoisie in the days of Kipling, of the German private bourgeoisie under William II, and of the Soviet state bourgeoisie in the age of Stalin. It can be safely assumed that it is also true of the state bourgeoisies of Poland and Czechoslovakia today. Both have cause to be proud of their industrial achievements, resentful of the constant interference of the Communist party demagogues, and still more resentful of foreign rule. Polish and Czech nationalism thus have two roots. One lies in the liberal and patriotic traditions of the past, the other in the industrial achievement of the present. The bigger and stronger the economic machines they control, the more will the Polish and Czech state bourgeoisies resent their subjection to Soviet masters. The various types of discontent—of worker against state boss, of peasant against the towns, of Catholic against religious persecution, and of ruling state bourgeois against Soviet rule—are of course separate from each other. But the causes of nationalism are powerful, they affect members of the Communist parties as well as the masses, and time will not remove them. How they will make themselves felt we cannot predict, but they will be felt.

It has been suggested above that the reunification of Germany is improbable in the foreseeable future, that a change in Germany's eastern frontiers is therefore still more improbable, that industrial development in Poland and Czechoslovakia is transform-

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ing the economic map of Europe, that similar social development is drawing the Polish and Czech peoples closer together, and that the emergence of new social forces is bound to create and perpetuate nationalism that is a serious danger to Soviet rule.

If these arguments are sound, there will be little obvious change in the immediate future, but there is and will be constant underlying change, which in their own vital interest the peoples and governments of the West must watch and interpret, and must be ready to exploit to their advantage whenever a real opportunity arises. Therefore the West needs not so much sudden heroism as prolonged and patient courage. The present deadlock, with its heavy financial and nervous strains, may last for many years.

This is of course a very unpopular view. From the east coast of the Atlantic it sometimes seems that American public opinion is marked by an optimism and an impatience that must make it very reluctant to accept so dull, unheroic, and irksome a prospect. With such an American attitude one can have the greatest sympathy. Yet if the facts do not fit the mood, it is not the facts but the mood that must be scrapped. To German opinion, the prospect will be still more unwelcome. Conscious of their new strength and prosperity, the Germans feel more than ever that the division of their country is intolerable. Some have visions of a German-American alliance, in which they will start as junior partner, which will bypass the decadent Westerners, the flighty French, and the tepid English. Brandishing its weapons, the Bonn-Washington axis will liberate eastern Germany. Then who knows how far the boundaries of the Reich could extend, what status the junior partner acquire? These ideas, of course, have no relevance at all to the real policy of the United States: this does not prevent them from being taken seriously by many Germans and many Frenchmen, or from being exploited by Communist propaganda.

One can feel for the democratic German, and still more for the exiles from Eastern Europe, longing to liberate their homelands. The frustration of exile and the peculiar capacity of East Europeans to attribute to all but themselves the most ingeniously sordid motives combine to convince them that the West Europeans are cowardly and comfort-loving traitors who have "betrayed" them to their oppressors. Yet however great one's sympathy, one is compelled to remind them that a war of liberation, whatever its result, would not only destroy materialistic Paris, decadent Rome, and ungrateful London, but would also cause the deaths of tens of millions of East Europeans, whom their Soviet masters would deport without regard for man, woman, or child. The annihilation of the Chechen people is an example to reflect on.

THE liberation of Eastern Germany and the liberation of Eastern Europe are one problem. This the peoples of the West, and above all the Germans, must understand. Germans must understand that Poles and Czechs are victims of the same Stalinist tyranny as their own kinsmen. Americans and West Europeans must pay no attention to the myths, beloved of German nationalists, that Poles and Czechs and Russians are lovers of Bolshevism, or "Asiatics." Germans may wish to make themselves sole allies of America to the exclusion of Western Europe. Americans may be impatient of French or British policy, and impressed by German recovery. French or British may exaggerate American criticisms of themselves, and fall for some of the arguments of Communist propaganda, which are often subtle and often disseminated in good faith by persons who are not Communists. Yet it remains true that America, Western Europe, and Germany stand and fall together. They must remain united, as such wise men as Dr. Adenauer recognize. They must also constantly watch their enemy and study the forces that are growing in the subject lands. They must be neither false optimists nor false pessimists. They must reject bogus short cuts but they must never abandon their long-term aim, the liberation of both Germany and Europe.

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JEW IN THE FACTORY

How He Looks to His Fellow Workers

WARNER BLOOMBERG, JR.

IT WAS a late summer afternoon and the air inside the plant was thick with heat. Those of us who had come in for the evening shift a little more than an hour before began to pace ourselves slower than usual, and I welcomed an interruption when Old Mike waved to me across the packaging floor. A wide grin split his broad Balkan face as he called "Heyya! C'mere! C'mere!"

I walked over to where he stood, a short, stout man leaning on his broom. He had been in the mill for a long time, though he was still a laborer. His gray hair and slight paunch belied the powerful muscles of a man who had worked hard for too many years.

"Hey boy," he said to me as I approached. "What you name?"

"My name?" I was a little puzzled since we had worked in the same department for nearly a year. "Bloomberg."

"Bloomberg?" Old Mike cocked his head to one side, a habitual gesture of his to indicate deep thought. "Bloomberg? What you? Swede? German?"

There was a time when I might have replied with some pseudo-educational subterfuge like "We're all Americans, Mike" or "My grandparents came from Russia and Austria." But I had learned by then that this accomplished nothing but confusion. So I said, "It's a Jewish name."

Mike cocked his head still farther and squinted at me to show doubt. "No! You Jew-boy?"

"That's right."

"Maybe you just part Jew?"

"Nope. I'm a full-blooded Jew—all the way back as far as you can go!"

Mike shook his head in disbelief. "No Jew-boy in factory! Whatsa matter, boy? You lost?"

I DID NOT try to explain the personal odyssey that had taken me from the University of Chicago into this Gary, Indiana, steel mill. Nor did I attempt to initiate any broader discussion about the historical and cultural pressures that have channelized the vocational choices of most Jews for so many generations. All that would have been equally incomprehensible to Mike. Reality is defined for him by the world he knows—the community he lives in, the few places he has visited or heard about from friends, the little he may read, and the much he has learned from the legends of his group. And it is true, by almost all he has seen or read or heard, that there are no "Jew-boys" in the factories.

I worked on the labor gang at a medium-sized Gary factory for a few months. "I can remember one Jew," my foreman told me, "only one who worked here before you. He couldn't hardly talk English and I remember once when he was hooking up rods, like you been doing. Ikey—we called him

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WARNER BLOOMBERG, JR., is not the only Jew who has ever worked in a steel mill; indeed, a number of Jewish fellow students from the University of Chicago have, for one reason or another, gone down to Gary to work in the large plants there. But that's just the rub: they come to make some extra money, to get into union work, to get material for a novel or an advanced degree. They don't come because they have to, and they don't become, simply, steelworkers. This is the "problem" that Mr. Bloomberg—who has worked in eight factories—here considers, together with its implications for Jewish-Gentile relations in America. Mr. Bloomberg was born in Massillon, Ohio, in 1926, and holds a master of arts degree from the Division of Social Sciences, University of Chicago, where he is now an instructor.

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Ikey, I don't remember what his real name was—well, Ikey was hooking these rods out of a railroad car and there was a skunk in the car. Ikey didn't know what it was and he tried to pet it. I heard him shouting and smelled the damn thing."

At this point the foreman began to laugh aloud, body-shaking gasps and chuckles. "When I ran over, he was chasing the skunk with a big stick from the timber in the car. 'What happened, Ikey?' I shouted to him. 'Oy!' he hollers back. 'That damn pussy cat squirt all over me!'"

The foreman had known other Jews in Gary, for the city has a small but lively Jewish community. But "Ikey" was the only Jew he had met in a factory before me.

"Listen, I know your people!" I was told by another foreman at a larger mill where I worked for nearly two years. It was a slow midnight shift and we had plenty of time for talk. (Few such interesting conversations occur on the day shift—too many bosses around.) "Why, I worked for Jews and even lived with them when I was a kid. Ate plenty of those fishballs you people make. They didn't work in the mill, you can bet your life! Can't get that old *gelt* in a factory. I can count on my fingers the Jews I know of who've worked here, and none of them stayed longer than it took to find a clerking job or save up enough to get a pushcart or open a little store somewhere."

He pointed an assertive finger at me. "You, too, kid! You won't be here long either. I don't know what you're after, but it won't be in the mill. You too! You won't stay in the mill!"

And, of course, he was right. I didn't.

But the time I did spend in the mills gave me a chance to see myself as a Jew and my fellow Jews as we appeared to so many American workingmen. I began to listen, not only for the traditional anti-Semitic prejudices, but also for any accurate impressions of us that might be contained in what we call, with perhaps a little prejudice of our own, the American Gentile's stereotype of the American Jew. I began to look about this Midwestern community to see what proof they thought they had found in that little world they knew well for their assertions that Jews would not work with their hands, that Jews all had money, that Jews possessed some shrewd cunning alien to the rest of the human race.

The evidence was surprisingly ample.

As is true in most of America's industrial cities, a great majority of Gary's breadwinners "work with their hands," although increasingly their jobs involve less onerous and more skilled manipulation of controls on machinery. While a Jew is rarely found in the many local factories, Jews are much more in evidence in downtown Gary than the gross percentages, two and one-half per cent of the city's population, would suggest. Nearly a tenth of the community's dentists are Jews and more than a tenth of its doctors and lawyers. Jews make up a larger proportion of the retail and wholesale merchants, especially in clothing (whether expensive haberdasheries or "workingmen's stores" at the other end of Broadway) but also in furniture, household appliances, and building supplies. Gary's Jews sell to its multitudes of workers, skilled and unskilled, service them, employ them—but they do not work among them.

One lunch hour I was arguing with Andy, a young Polish American, about the notion that Jews won't do manual work. After he had taken note of the places where one encountered Jews in Gary, not counting myself and a few other rare exceptions, I decided the time was ripe for a little "educational" work. I explained the long history of oppressions and persecutions that drove European Jewry so long ago from the crafts and the land and established over the centuries a deep-seated cultural predisposition for business and the professions. "I didn't know about that," Andy said. I reminded him of the discrimination against Jews displayed by company hiring and promoting practices until recently. "You weren't the only ones," he said. I pointed out the host of Jewish farmers and factory workers in the land of Israel. "Is that right?" he said with interest.

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But I hadn't got too far when I was done. "Look," Andy said, "I'm a Polack. My people never worked in factories until they came to this country—at least damn few of them—but they was mill hands right after they got here and they still are. You got as much chance now as anyone else to get promoted, the union'll see to it, and you can't tell me this outfit wouldn't hire Jews or damn near anybody else they could get the past ten, fifteen years. Right?"

I agreed.

"Well then," he demanded, "how come you're about the only Jew in this whole part of the mill?"

Further references to history accomplished little—that was too long ago. Additional comparisons with Israel hardly weighted the scales—that was too far away, too special a case. In Andy's world of here and now, in the spatial and temporal present of American industrial communities, Jews don't work in the mills, apparently won't work with their hands. The distinction between "don't" and "won't" is a little too fine to have any meaning. A Jew can walk into the employment office any time he wants to.

I have quite a few Jewish friends who plead guilty to the "charge," and who seem to *feel* guilty about it. My wife and I have been building our home (while we live in it) since shortly before I first went to work in a Gary mill over three years ago. "You are both quite exceptional," said a rabbi (not of Gary). "Jews usually are not inclined to work with their hands like that." The wife of a local merchant exclaimed: "Why, I never heard of such a thing!" When I assured her that many people build their own homes, she replied: "Oh, I know that. But not *our* people!"

Andy had an explanation for this presumed Jewish aversion to physical labor.

"There's one thing I've never been able to figure out about your working here," he told me. "You won't make any money in this place, not *real* money like your people always make."

The history of Andy's family, as he knew it from experience and hearsay, was like that of so many industrial workers, a long and not always successful battle with poverty—at least until the last dozen years. It seemed to these people that the American Jews almost never shared this fate.

During another lunchtime conversation among a group of us one of the men, referring to a fairly well-known Gary citizen, said, "Sure he's got a lot of dough. He's a Jew, ain't he?" Several nodded but a few glanced in my direction as if expecting some retort. However, "Farmer" Harden (who as far as I know has never been a farmer) exercised his sense of humor on the situation. "How about that, Bloomberg!" he shouted at me. "When you going to dig into that million you got stached away and come to work in a Cadillac 'stead of that crummy old Plymouth of yours?"

"Don't worry about him!" the foreman boomed out. "You'll get that old *gelt*, won't you, 'Bloom-in-berger'?"

"You mean," I replied, "I won't lose what I make growing a spaghetti and Dago-red potgut like you got!"

Joe patted his stomach. "Don't insult that," he said as we all laughed. "That's a lifetime investment and I wouldn't trade it for any fat Jewish bankbook!"

WHY are they so sure that Jews always have money? It is true that the Jewish community in Gary looks at present quite prosperous. More than a decade of economic boom has rewarded the Jews handsomely for their specialization in the goods and services the local community needs. Undoubtedly the inner and outer pressures which guide so many Jews into the professions and commerce have served them better from the standpoint of income than tendencies to become ditchdiggers, migratory farm laborers, or low-skilled factory hands. Moreover, the rather tightly knit ethnic community also offers a wide network of useful "contacts" for the young Jew "starting out." The old Reform Sunday school hymn told us: "There is a mystic tie that binds the children of the martyred race." However it may defy analysis, that tie can be most useful

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in opening a shop or office, from the standpoint both of location and clientele.

But even in less prosperous times than these recent years the Jews appeared to these workingmen somehow to have more than their share of wealth. The Jews seemed to escape poverty. "I can still show you poor Bohunks, Dagoes, Polacks," one of my friends argued earnestly. "But you show me a poor Jew!"

As I sought to answer him, casting about for a truthful and understandable explanation, I realized that the poverty-stricken Jew in fact is seldom seen by most American workers. This is not only because the Jew often lives somewhat apart, not only because he is such a small minority, not only because his tendencies toward middle-class occupations favor him economically. It is also a consequence of the fact that American Jewry, for all the charges, from within and without, of being "careful" with its money, has done a remarkably good job of taking care of its own.

On a personal level this cultural impulse toward giving has yet another effect. My factory friends were often surprised when I told them of the extent of gift-giving that goes on among Jewish families, especially from parents to children. (Those workers who had a Jewish friend or two always volunteered the information that these friends were unusually generous.) They were somewhat more familiar with the "I can get it for you wholesale" that helps some Jews with less income to equal the possessions of the Gentile who earns more. Less a part of their experience, again, was the intense drive for education that pervades Jewish life and leads so many young Jews into more lucrative occupations.

It all seems a little mysterious to Joe or Andy or "Farmer." Somehow escaping the life of physical toil, the American Jew appears almost magically to attract, if not wealth, then at least a material well-being that workingmen admire, envy, but often cannot attain. And vaguely to their minds from time to time come ancient warnings about the Jews and their dangerous talents.

"Don't worry, I'd never try to trick *you*," a particularly obnoxious fellow from the Kentucky hills told me during a conversation about buying and selling used cars. "I'm pretty sharp," he added, "but I know better than to try to get the best of a Jew. I'd be beat before I started!"

Whatever qualities they attribute to each other, the different groups in the factory work force have learned that they are all pretty much the same as far as their role in our daily economic life is concerned. The Italian American who feels that he has been overcharged by his German American doctor, his Irish American clothing merchandiser, his Polish American grocer, can find their "countrymen" on his shift in the mill and, if he wants, complain to them about the injustice. They may sympathize with him or they may tell him where to take his "Dago" troubles. But he knows that as a group they are blessed with no faculties more occult or powerful than his own.

But if he comes to work with a tale of corrupt practices by a Jewish professional or businessman, he finds no Jew who shares his own vocational and economic fate and can commiserate with him over the faults of some of the "race" or tell him where to get off. Above him, below him, and equal to him in the hierarchy of the plant he can find representatives of nearly every other American ethnic group, and of the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority, too. Only the Jews are missing.

As I came to see myself and other Jews through these workers' eyes, I saw also that their prejudices reflected not only the malicious and debasing hatreds of humankind's emotional sewers, but also grew honestly out of experience. Then I began to feel more free to speak out to them, not as some near-anonymous, unidentifiable, somehow homogenized American, but as a Jew. And I found, to my delighted surprise, that they had been waiting for me to do this.

I WAS working with the obnoxious Kentuckian early in the evening one four-to-twelve shift. (This was prior to the dis-

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cussion about used cars.) The craneman for whom I regularly hooked was driving a tractor that shift and this fellow had taken his place. The conversation that went on between us covered the range of subjects which can occupy two men working together in a factory—sports, cars, women, family, travel, politics. We managed to disagree about all of them, sharpening the obvious conviction of each that the other was doing only half a job at best.

Then he got somehow into a long discourse on how he could always tell if a man was a Jew—the nose, maybe, or the hair, or "just something" about him. "Almost like I could smell him," he claimed. I denied that he or anyone had such powers, adding weight to my declarations by telling him that I knew more Jews and more about them than he ever would.

He leaned over the edge of the crane cab a little. "You aren't a Jew, are you?"

"You're damn right I am!"

He looked a little surprised, sat back, and started to work the controls. Later, when he came down from the crane for lunch and we were talking again, he said: "I bet you thought I didn't know you were Jewish when I began to talk about Jews."

"Well?"

"Hell! I knew you was a Jew! Like I said, I can always tell. Even if you don't never talk like you was a Jew. Least not till tonight."

You're a liar, I thought, but I did not argue with him further. I was preoccupied with his last remark, that I had "never talked like a Jew" until that evening. What did the so-and-so mean by that? Suddenly I knew. In that moment I realized that of all the men on our crew, I was the only one who really tried to be an "unhyphenated American," who actually looked upon himself as brother to all men instead of a member of a specific "race" or "nationality."

After that I began to talk about Jews from time to time, just as those of Polish, Italian, Irish, German, Greek, or Slavic extraction talked about their "countrymen." As appropriate occasions arose, I found myself covering quite a range of subjects—Jewish cooking, Jewish religious beliefs, Jewish family life, Jewish vocational predispositions, Jewish business practices. I explained, defended, or merely added grist to the conversational mill in the same way as the Polacks, Dagoes, Bohunks, Micks, and colored would at one time or another rise to rebuff an assault on the reputation of their group, or would inform a curious listener about its traditions, or would merely relate some anecdote about what it means to belong to such a segment of humanity.

Whenever I spoke about Jewish matters, my fellow workers were interested. They listened, they expressed assent or disbelief, they argued, they inquired further. A whole new dimension in my relations with them had opened, and I found in turn that I was learning from them, that they were leading me to re-examine aspects of my life I had long taken for granted.

I AM one of that rather large number of "unreligious" young Jews, taking "religious" in the most conventional sense of the word. I inherited the neither-here-nor-there Jewishness of my father, which still characterizes much of my own family life today. In a home such as the one I grew up in, a child attends Reform Sunday school where he learns little because he is not much involved. The family goes to temple on the High Holidays but seldom in between. Christmas and the Fourth of July may get much the same kind of attention as the favored Jewish holidays that are celebrated. Yet there is never any doubt that one is and always will be a Jew.

I was aware even when young that there were other modes of Jewishness, ranging from the old Orthodox life permeated by piety and tradition, through the resurgent, consciously implanted "Jewishness in the home" that characterizes increasing numbers of families of Conservative or Reform leanings. I never considered myself any less "Jewish" than these others (and I still do not). And when we walked abroad among the Gentiles, we were the same. Most of us

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carried our Jewishness in our hearts but hoped it would not show on our faces. We were eager to be viewed by the larger middle-class community as part and parcel of its supposedly undifferentiated secular self. We were anxious not to be discriminated against, anxious to avoid embarrassment. Only the older, un-Americanized Jew still spoke as a Jew in public; but his public, even in the middle-sized Midwestern city, was a self-selected all-Jewish ghetto with neither the opportunities nor the dangers of the mixed world into which most Jews ventured in the course of their daily work and many of their pleasures.

No matter how fully the Jew recognized and designated himself as such within the home, he usually sought some all-American anonymity abroad. At work or in a public place a remark about Jews, whether in the covertly aggressive style of humor or as a baldly provocative assertion, brought him inner anguish but more often than not produced a poker-faced non-reaction on his exterior. He would wait tensely for the course of conversation to change, perhaps hoping that some friend, aware that he a Jew was among them, would adroitly alter its course. Cultural pluralism by the hearth, homogeneity in the streets.

In the factory I found a new pleasure in being a Jew openly and, on the few occasions when I felt like it, aggressively. When Joe discussed Italian cooking, I compared *kreplach* with ravioli. Andy and I talked for nearly an hour about similarities and differences between Catholicism and Judaism. If the Negro Harry complained that he had been "done" by a Jewish merchant in Gary, I asked how many times financially delinquent members of his race had been aided and befriended by my brethren in the retail trades.

A Litvak named Steve was particularly a nuisance about my being Jewish. He was the only man in the department who called me a "kike," I think not realizing that this was like calling an Italian American a "wop" instead of a "Dago." Occasionally he would announce that he liked to watch me talk because I waved my hands around so much. He enjoyed telling the girls in the department that there were two Jews working with them—myself and the Negro tractor driver Morris with whom I worked moving piles of sheet steel, a man noted for the close guard he kept on his old-fashioned purse. "We got a white Jew and a black one!" Steve would exclaim.

I bided my time, waiting for the ideal moment that was bound to come sooner or later. One day Steve and Morris got into a heated argument over the way the work was being done. It was an important issue and Steve, good Slav that he was, soon was gesticulating toward the ceiling, the floor and the farthest walls. I stood beside them quietly repeating from moment to moment: "Steve, put your hands in your pockets!"

Each time I made this remark of obvious reference, his face grew more livid but his hands would not stay still. He became flustered and Morris began to win the argument, a real tragedy for Steve. Then, when he seemed almost on the verge of apoplexy, the good humor that characterizes the culture of the mixed factory society came to the surface. He started to laugh. "By God!" he roared. "There's *three* Jews out here—you, Morris, and me!" He never again referred to my gesturing.

Once I had dropped the guise of the unhyphenated American, which had so confused my fellow workers, I became the main source of whatever information about Jews they might occasionally desire. I think I did good service in the cause of mutual understanding. More important for myself, I began to sense more of the dimensions and qualities of this factory milieu as far as intergroup relations were concerned. It certainly was not based on any profusion of brotherly love, for I had heard every prejudice expressed with frequency—all the nasty stereotypes about each minority group that worked in the mill or lived in Gary. On the other hand, there was a profound respect for the

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common undertaking of the jobs we did, the common opposition to management, the common rights we had under the union contract. In these things we were equal—any differences were individual, unrelated to race or religion or national origins.

Here was a notion of equality in which the men could believe, which they could uphold in their actions—equality within the limits of a specific joint enterprise and equality before the law. But they never confused that concept with identity. In the milieu of the factory men are not the same, not required to love one another, are perhaps "cousins" but certainly are not "brothers." They know they are different from each other, whether the differences are racial or traditional; and they are deeply loyal to their own group. Yet they will uphold a man's rights on the job whether he comes from a segment of society they love or hate. Free from the onerous and unfair burden of pretending love for those they really dislike, of asserting a common nature when all of life's experiences insist on the existence of crucial differences, they can yet work out an increasingly stable, effective, and happy association.

A NUMBER of us, colored and white, were enjoying a round of joke-telling during our extra-long lunch one midnight shift. "Smitty," a thin little white man with those natural talents that have carried more than one vaudeville star to fortune, rose to command the only stage on which he ever would appear. Atop a package of steel plate he announced: "Here's one that I learned in the army.

"There was a big review, see, and when you go by the reviewing stand everybody's supposed to look toward the commanding officer right when the order's given—lots of snap and stuff, you know. And the officer in charge of this one platoon, he told 'em over and over, 'When I say Eyes Right! that's just what I mean! I want every one of you mother's sons to remember that! Remember! Eyes Right!'

"Well, they go marching by the reviewing stand and this officer hollers 'Eyes Right!' and everybody snaps their heads around so hard you can hear their tailbones click—all except a big colored fellow, Willie, right up in the front row where everybody can see him. He goes marching along, looking straight ahead. The officer hollers 'Eyes Right!' again and Willie, he just keeps looking straight ahead.

"Soon as the parade's over, the officer, he grabs Willie and he hollers at him: 'What the hell is the matter with you?' And Willie says, 'Mattuh, suh?' This makes the officer even madder and his face gets all red and he screams at Willie, 'Didn't you hear me say Eyes Right!'

"And Willie, he says, 'Yassuh, boss. And yo sho is!' "

There was a roar of laughter. I flinched a little inside and glanced at the Negroes in our group. They were laughing too, loud and long—a genuine laughter, not a cover-up, not in the least strained. And why not? We recognized our differences, informed each other about them, argued about them, attacked and defended them. Why not tell jokes about them, too? "Smitty" has his quota of anti-Negro prejudices, but he wasn't exercising them when he gave his performance that night. There was no malice in his mind or in the minds of his listeners. It was a funny story based on a difference in the normal speech of two groups, a difference everyone knew about and accepted as natural.

Later on four of the men started an Italian game, "chingo," which is too complicated for brief description but which appears to the uninitiated like a hysterical waving of arms accompanied by a bedlam of Italo-English polyglot and curses in half a dozen tongues. "Smitty" and one of the Negroes teamed up against the Italian foreman Joe and a Welshman, also a crane operator, who grew the biggest tomatoes to decorate our lunchtime. The rest of us sat around them and chided and cheered. "Farmer," also something of an expert in the game, turned to me. "Bloomberg," he said, "you oughta learn this, only do your counting in that there Yiddish your

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people talk. You'd really have these guys buffaloed!"

IT IS a year since I left the factory. The world to which I have in part returned, a society of publicly homogenized Americans, is uncongenial to my new-found freedom. I regret this. Somehow, for me, no amount of consciously contrived Jewish ritualism in the privacy of our home can substitute for the easy and spontaneous expression of my identity and cultural inheritance among the Gentiles. But the artifices of middle-class inter-group etiquette and the propaganda of brotherly love will not have it so.

Yet there are signs of change, hopeful change from my point of view. The long alienation of the Jews from the manual crafts is giving way, more slowly in the face of simple opportunity in America than under the impact of dire necessity in Israel. Of the Jews finding their way into the factories, proportionately more are engineers and technicians than hourly paid employees. But there is an increasing number who prefer to earn a solid (if somewhat greasy) paycheck with accompanying benefits and security than squeeze out a living as meager proprietors or common clerks.

It should be said, of course, that even a mass migration of Jews into the occupations of our factories would not utterly re-create the attitudes of the rest of the workers toward Jews. Anti-Semitic prejudices are much more than an exaggerated reaction to contemporary social realities; they are as deeply imbedded in their respective cultures as are the traditional vocational predispositions of the Jews. But it is equally true that the traditional hatreds of, say, the Irish for the English or the Poles for the Germans have been mitigated in great degree by their common experiences on the job and in the community.

Perhaps the workers' antipathy toward the Jews is given a special quality by its very universality. Only toward the Jews and the Negroes does every other ethnic and national sub-culture in America have a specific and similarly antagonistic attitude. But Negroes work in the mills, all too obviously suffer poverty, and are stereotypically assigned qualities quite opposite to those which would beget wealth and power. If there are unique characteristics in the anti-Semitic prejudices of the workers that distinguish them from prejudices against other groups, there also appears to be an equally unique validation of those hostile preconceptions in the day-to-day life of a town like Gary. Though changes in vocational patterns among Jews obviously will not eliminate the traditional anti-Jewish feelings of the workers, neither will they leave them entirely unaltered.

Especially if, on the job, American Jews will come to feel less constrained to hide their qualities and accomplishments under an ill-fitting and little-concealing cloak of often embarrassed, often unsuccessful public anonymity. Any minority which has been as successful as the Jews in America is in no position to attempt to escape special designation, and I doubt that we really would want to exchange any part of our achievement for a more brotherly embrace from our fellow Americans. If out of our anxieties and fears we protest too much that we are all alike, we may find that we have neither allayed suspicion nor lessened prejudice. In the mill, at least, candor seemed the most effective technique for setting the Gentile straight about his prejudices.

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THE "IDEALISM" OF JULIUS AND ETHEL ROSENBERG

"The Kind of People We Are"

ROBERT WARSHOW

JULIUS and Ethel Rosenberg were not put to death for their opinions, but from their side, clearly, they died for their opinions nevertheless. And not only did they choose to give up their lives: each sacrificed the other, and both together sacrificed their two young children. Yet they must have loved the children; it is true that they permitted them to be exploited outrageously in the service of propaganda, but from their side, again, this would not have appeared to be exploitation. And obviously they loved each other; there is no hint of disharmony between them, and only a gross want of imagination could lead one to think they were not being spontaneous when, for instance, they stood holding hands to hear their sentence. It would be hard to overstate the immensity of their fortitude, which seems never to have come close to failure, or the weight of their suffering.

For the two years in the death cells they lived within about a hundred feet of each other but could be together only during brief weekly visits or when their lawyer came to confer with them (apparently, if they had been brothers instead of man and wife they might have had adjoining cells). They therefore had to communicate frequently in letters. A selection of their letters to each other, together with some letters to their lawyer, Emanuel Bloch, has been brought out by the "Jero Publishing Company." The selection goes up to the middle of March of this year, and the book itself went to press shortly before the Rosenbergs' execution, which took place on June 19. The volume includes also an outline of the chronology of the case and an appendix containing excerpts from the Rosenbergs' petition for clemency and statements from various people who either believed that the Rosenbergs were innocent or felt that their sentence was too severe. Proceeds from the sale of the book are supposed to go into a fund for the Rosenbergs' two children, Michael and Robert, who are ten years and six years old. In Europe these letters, like all the propaganda in the Rosenberg case, have been received with great excitement. Here, they appear to be making little impact, though there seems to be no inclination on the part of the Communists to let the propaganda campaign subside. (The weekend edition of the *Daily Worker* has been running a series of biographical articles about the Rosenbergs under the title "Two Immortals." Meetings and rallies continue to be held, and the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case plans to distribute "throughout the world" the "Rosenberg Dedication Book," a slick-paper booklet offering an extremely skillful compendium of demagogy.)

THE execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg has by no means ended the Communist propaganda campaign seeking their "vindication"—a campaign which, though not noticeably successful in this country, has had great effect in Europe where the facts of the case are of course less familiar to the mass of the population. One of the recent and more effective items of propaganda has been the publication of a selection of the letters written by the Rosenbergs while they were in prison. ROBERT WARSHOW tries to find in these letters some clue to the personalities of these two people who betrayed the free world in favor of the Communist tyranny, and who yet could go to their deaths secure in the conviction of their own rectitude. Mr. Warshow, an associate editor of COMMENTARY, has written frequently for our pages, for *Partisan Review*, and for other periodicals. His article on Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, published in COMMENTARY for March of this year, may be seen as a companion piece to the present article.

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THE children came to visit, and the father and mother, like any anxious and intelligent parents, discuss in their letters how best to "approach" the situation, how to give "the impression that we are not unduly upset" and thus evoke a "proper reaction." In advance of the first visit, Ethel considers that she will say something like this: "Of course, it's not easy to know about the death penalty and not worry about it sometimes, but let's look at it this way. We know that a car could strike us and kill us, but that doesn't mean we spend every minute being fearful about cars. . . ." There is even a note of serene understanding about the "people who solved their own problems by lying about us," and she plans to assure the children that "it's all right to feel any way you like about those people, so long as your feelings don't give you pain and make you unhappy—" "Oh, yes," she adds in another letter, "if Michael neglects to question me as to the form of the death penalty, this job will fall to you. . . . Answer briefly that it is painless electrocution, which we believe will never come to pass, of course." After a second visit, Julius reports that Michael did indeed ask how the death penalty is carried out and whether there was an electric chair in the building; Julius answered straightforwardly. Michael said also, "Daddy, maybe I'll study to be a lawyer and help you in your case." "The fact is," Julius writes, "both children are disturbed."

Much of the correspondence deals with plans for the care of the children. "I fully understand and share your anguish," Julius writes, "but we are very well qualified to organize the proper program of rehabilitation for our children. . . . The entire home, play and materials situation needs a radical change. . . . Mind you, I'm not alarmed, as I feel the necessary conditions exist to do a good job. . . . I'm counting on your analytical mind and sense of detail to help carry the ball for us." As Christmas approaches, he consults the *National Guardian* for a list of suitable books for the boys.

Ethel is often more rhetorical: "I . . . experience such a stab of longing for my boy that I could howl like a she-animal who has had its young forcibly torn from her! How dared they, how dared they, the low, vile creatures, lay unclean hands upon our sacred family? And tell me, oh my sister Americans, how long shall any of your own husbands and children be safe if by your silence you permit this deed to go unchallenged!"

The fact that Julius Rosenberg can speak of a lack of toys as the "materials situation" does not in the least permit us to assume he did not suffer for his children just as much as anyone else would have suffered. Nor does the impudence of Ethel's appeal to her "sister Americans"—whose lives she had been willing to put in danger—diminish in any way the reality of the "stab of longing for my boy." On the whole, the Rosenbergs in dealing with their children sound the authentic tone of parental love in the educated and conscientious middle class, facing each "problem" boldly and without displaying undue emotion, though "of course" not denying the existence of emotion either ("Of course it's not easy to know about the death penalty and not worry about it sometimes. . . ."). This is how we all deal with our children, and surely we are right to do so. If it happens that you must "prepare" the children for their parents' death in the electric chair instead of for having their tonsils out, then doubtless something better is required. But what, for God's sake? Some unique inspiration, perhaps, and the truth. But we cannot blame the Rosenbergs for their failure to achieve an inspiration, and the commitment for which they died—and by which, we must assume, they somehow fulfilled themselves—was precisely that the truth was not to be spoken.

NOT spoken, not whispered, not approached in the merest hint. These letters were undoubtedly written, or revised, for publication; in any case, they were subject to examination by prison officials. Under the circumstances, they could not have been truthful. But there is something uncanny nevertheless in the way this husband and wife

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felt compelled to write to each other, never evading the issue but, on the contrary, coming back to it continually in order to repeat continually what was not true. "We are innocent"—again and again Julius tells this to Ethel and Ethel tells it back to Julius. "What have we done to deserve such unhappiness? All our years we lived decent, constructive lives." "I firmly believe that we are better people because we stood up with courage through a very grueling trial and a most brutal sentence, all because we are innocent." "I'm certain we will beat this frame-up. . . ." The word "Communist" never appears except in quotation marks; when Julius seeks to define the faith for which he is prepared to die, he can say only that he is "a progressive individual"—this after a fragment of autobiography, addressed to his lawyer, which makes it especially clear that he was a Communist. He is even forced to speak of espionage—to him, surely, the very crown of the "decent, constructive" life of "a progressive individual"—as a "crime": "Can I deny the principles that are so much part of me? This I can never do. I cannot live a lie nor can I be like the Greenglasses and the Bentleys. My entire life and philosophy negates this and it is obvious that I could never commit the crime I stand convicted of."

No doubt there is a certain covert truth-telling in all this, with "we are innocent" standing for "my resolve is unshaken; I will not confess." But one is forced to wonder whether the literal truth had not in some way ceased to exist for these people. It is now about seventeen years since Communists told the truth about themselves—the "popular front" was inaugurated during Julius Rosenberg's student days at City College—and enough time has passed for the symbolic language of Communism to have taken on an independent existence. On July 4, 1951, Julius clipped a copy of the Declaration of Independence from the New York *Times* and taped it to the wall of his cell. "It is interesting," he writes to Ethel, "to read these words concerning free speech, freedom of the press and of religion in this setting. These rights our country's patriots died for can't be taken from the people even by Congress or the courts." Does it matter that the Declaration of Independence says nothing about free speech, freedom of the press, or freedom of religion, and that Julius therefore could not have found it "interesting" to read "these words" in that particular document? It does not matter. Julius knew that America is supposed to have freedom of expression and that the Declaration of Independence "stands for" America. Since, therefore, he already "knew" the Declaration, there was no need for him to actually read it in order to find it "interesting," and it could not have occurred to him that he was being untruthful in implying that he had just been reading it when he had not. He could "see himself" reading it, so to speak, and this dramatic image became reality: he *did not know* that he had not read it.

Similarly, when he says "it is obvious that I could never commit the crime I stand convicted of," we cannot assume that he is simply lying. More probably, what he means is something like this: If it were a crime, I could not have done it. Since in the language of the unenlightened what I did is called a crime, and I am forced to speak in that language, the only truthful thing to say is that I did not do it.

It is as if these two had no internal sense of their own being but could see themselves only from the outside, in whatever postures their "case" seemed to demand—as if, one might say, they were only the most devoted of their thousands of "sympathizers."

"We didn't ask for this; we only wanted to be left alone, but framed we were—and with every ounce of life in our bodies we will fight until we are free."

"Together we hunted down the answers to all the seemingly insoluble riddles which a complex and callous society presented. . . . For the sake of these answers, for the sake of American democracy, justice and brotherhood, for the sake of peace and bread and roses, and children's laughter, we shall continue to sit here in dignity and in pride. . . ."

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"At stake here are the rights, security and very lives of all brave people of all shades of opinions."

"The world is watching our government's action in this case and the conscience of men of good will is outraged by the brutal sentence and the miscarriage of justice in the Rosenberg case."

"The Rosenbergs' calm prediction [it is Ethel Rosenberg who writes this!] that the people would refuse to acquiesce in legal murder has been borne out a thousand times over."

"Is it worth forfeiting two warm, young lives [this too is Ethel], about whose guilt the world says there is reasonable doubt, to save the face of the United States?"

"By our conduct in this case, when our lives are at stake, we are illustrating the fundamental tenets of our democracy."

THE tone is no different, really, when they write of the more personal furniture of their lives:

"For about an hour beginning at about 9:00 p.m. I walk and sing songs, mostly folk music, workers' songs, peoples' songs, popular tunes and excerpts from operas and symphonies. I sing Peat Bog Soldiers, Kevin Barry, United Nations, Tennessee Waltz, Irene, Down in the Valley, Beethoven's Ninth Choral Symphony. . . . In all frankness, I feel good and strong while I sing."

"I am reading *Science and Politics in the Ancient World,* by Benjamin Farrington. He gives documentary proof that the enemy of scientific growth was superstition imposed on the people by the nobles of the state and heads of the church for the purpose of maintaining the status quo and their preferred class position."

". . . After a while, some of the pain gripping me eased. It needed only a radio program, and 'Ballad for Americans,' for the finishing touch. With Frank Sinatra's recording of 'House I Live In,' I had a tremendous upsurge of 'courage, confidence and perspective'!"

"Did you ever notice the comfortable feeling one gets reading and listening to rain? I thought, what a wonderful world we live in, and how much man could do with full utilization of his creative ability."

". . . the Dodgers [have] made me bite off every last confounded nail; 10-0, what a trouncing! It's that indomitable spirit that has endeared them to so many. But it is chiefly in their outstanding contribution to the eradication of racial prejudice that they have covered themselves with glory."

"I have been reading again *Gentleman's Agreement,* and it made me realize how starved I was for intellectual exchange. . . ."

"I'm simply carried away, enthralled, enraptured! You can't guess. Well, I've been listening to 'Old Man Tosc' conducting the NBC summer symphony. What a magnificence of sound that guy can call forth; it's positively incredible."

IT WOULD be heartless to multiply these quotations merely in order to make a display of the awkwardness and falsity of the Rosenbergs' relations to culture, to sports, and to themselves. But it is important to observe the dimensions of their failure, how almost nothing really belonged to them, not even their own experience; they filled their lives with the second-hand, never so much as suspecting that anything else was possible. Communism itself—the vehicle of whatever self-realization they achieved—had disappeared for them, becoming only a word to be written in quotation marks as if it represented a hallucination, and they faced death armed not even with the clichés of the proletarian revolution but only with the spiritless echoes of a few fellow-traveling newspapers and the memory of City College in 1934.

We need not doubt that Julius was strengthened by singing "Kevin Barry" or "United Nations" and that Ethel was cheered by hearing "Ballad for Americans," or, making allowance for her language, that she was "enraptured" by the NBC summer symphony. It is even possible to believe that Ethel was actually excited at the "trouncing" administered by the Dodgers to the Giants (it was the second game of the 1951 pen-

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nant play-off), and that her excitement was related to her appreciation of the Dodgers' "outstanding contribution to the eradication of racial prejudice." We know how easily these responses could have been changed: if "Old Man Tosc" had slighted Paul Robeson, if the Dodgers had fired one of their Negro players, if *Gentleman's Agreement* had been unfavorably reviewed in the *National Guardian*. But the initial responses and their contradictories would have been equally real, and equally unreal.

There is something in this more profound than insincerity. The ideal Communist responds only to the universal—to Revolution, to Progress, or, in Julius Rosenberg's revealing phrase, to "the kind of people we are." *Gentleman's Agreement* or "Ballad for Americans" are merely particular objects in which the universal happens at the moment to embody itself, and it is all the same if these objects disappear so long as new ones take their place. Whether he cheers the Yankees or the Dodgers, whether he damns Franklin Roosevelt as a warmonger or adores him as the champion of human rights, the Communist is always celebrating the same thing: the great empty Idea which has taken on the outlines of his personality. Communists are still "idealists"—perhaps all the more so because their "idealism" is by now almost entirely without content—and the surprising degree of sympathy and even respect that they can command among liberals is partly to be explained by the liberal belief that "idealism" in itself is a virtue.

CONSIDER the continual display of Judaism and Jewishness in these letters:

"Our upbringing, the full meaning of our lives, based on a true amalgamation of our American and Jewish heritage, which to us means freedom, culture and human decency, has made us the people we are."

"In a couple of days the Passover celebration of our people's search for freedom will be here. This cultural heritage has added meaning for us, who are imprisoned . . . by the modern Pharaohs."

". . . our fellow Jewish expression summarizes my feelings for [Emanuel Bloch]. *Ich shep nachuss und quell fun ihm.*"

"At Hebrew school . . . I absorbed quite naturally the culture of my people, their struggle for freedom from slavery in Egypt. I found the same great traditions in American history."

"The Jewish services were impressive. . . ."

"What solace to hear your voice during the Jewish services. . . ."

"It is amazing how intellectually stimulating Jewish services can be. . . ."

"I'd appreciate it if you would give the question of the Jewish holidays and their special significance for us, as part of a prison congregation, your serious consideration between now and our next talk."

"This holiday [Chanukah], signifying the victory of our forefathers in a struggle for freedom from oppression and tyranny, is a firm part of our heritage and buttresses our will to win our own freedom."

"The heritage of our Hebrew culture has served our people throughout the ages and we have learned its lesson well."

Except for the crudely calculated introduction of the word "Jewish" in places where it could not have been necessary in communication between a man and his wife, most of these sentences merely repeat the worn platitudes of a thousand sermons about the Jewish tradition. Since the propaganda built up around the case emphasized the fact that the Rosenbergs were Jewish, they simply adopted the role that was demanded of them.* If something else had been needed, they could as easily have taken up the pose of Protestantism or Catholicism or Gandhiism, and for any one of these roles they would have made use of the available platitudes (Communists are of course not alone

*It is striking that the Rosenbergs' letters make no reference to the claim that they were "framed" because of anti-Semitism; this would seem to indicate that that particular line of propaganda has not paid off. Julius speaks in one of his letters of the possibility that the "frame-up" might stimulate anti-Semitism by encouraging the belief that all Jews are Communists. In another letter he refers to the "smear campaign" attributing anti-Semitism to the Soviet Union.

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in their predilection for the second-hand).

But is there any difference between the patently disingenuous passages about Judaism and the occasional passages where the Rosenbergs might be thought to be expressing sentiments closer to their hearts? Supposing even that they had been ready to confess their espionage and proclaim it defiantly as the service to humanity they must have believed it to be, can it be thought they would have expressed themselves any less falsely than they have done in their claims of innocence or their pious espousals of "our people's heritage"?

THE point is that all beliefs, all ideas, all "heritages" were really the same to them, and they were equally incapable of truth and of falsehood. What they stood for was not Communism as a certain form of social organization, not progress as a belief in the possibility of human improvement, but only their own identity *as* Communists or "progressives," and they were perfectly "sincere" in making use of whatever catchwords seemed at any moment to assert that identity—just as one who seeks to establish his identity as a person of culture might try to do so either by praising abstract painting or by damning it. The Rosenbergs thought and felt whatever their political commitment required them to think and to feel. But if they had not had the political commitment could they have thought and felt at all?

Well, we cannot dispose of them quite so easily. They did suffer, for themselves and for their children, and though they seem never to have questioned the necessity of their "martyrdom" or the absolute rightness of all they had ever done (". . . when [the children] are older, they will know that all the way through, we . . . were right . . ."), they wept like anyone else at the approach of death; if it were not for that, one might wonder whether they had any real sense of what they were giving up when they chose to give up their lives.

For the final image is still their glassy serenity of conscience. It has been reported that when the United States Marshal came to tell Ethel Rosenberg that the final stay had been rescinded and the execution would take place in a few hours, she said simply, "Well, the Rosenbergs will be the first victims of American fascism." (The "Rosenberg Dedication Book" prints a brief note from Julius to Emanuel Bloch, dated on the day of execution, which also attributes these words to Ethel.) For her, this was a sufficient definition of what was about to happen to her. Perhaps the fact that she could say this, externalizing even her own death —not she was about to die, but a "victim of fascism"—should be for us a sufficient definition of what she had made of herself.

INEVITABLY it has been suggested that the Rosenbergs did not write these letters. Yet there is nothing in the quality of the letters to make one believe they could not have written them; they were people of no eloquence and little imagination, and their letters display none. (The "Rosenberg Dedication Book" demonstrates that there were writers available who could have done better.) Unquestionably there has been heavy editing, but again there is no reason to suppose that the Rosenbergs themselves may not have done the editing, both after the letters were written and in the process of writing them. In any case, the question is of no importance. The letters, if they were not written by the Rosenbergs, are what the Rosenbergs would have written. In their crudity and emptiness, in their absolute and dedicated alienation from truth and experience, these letters adequately express the Communism of 1953.

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THE GERMANS' PRESENT CONSERVATISM: ITS ROOTS

What the People Want

PETER SCHMID

"STRANGE," Frau Blumel confessed to me, when I visited her home in a modest housing development on the outskirts of a great German city, "we used to be much better off, before and during the war. My husband had a good job and influence as a party man. Now he only makes a fraction of his old salary, and works harder for it. But we are happier together now, because we need each other more. There are two sides to everything, you see, even war and poverty. . . ."

And yet they had both believed, when they were married during the 30's, that theirs was an ideal union. And things did go well in the beginning, until Herr Blumel's professional and party duties became increasingly demanding. Then came the war, the collapse, de-Nazification; Herr Blumel lost his job. Instead of the one-family house they used to have, they now lived in a bare attic room. But strangely, this loss of material well-being, instead of estranging them further, joined them in a common struggle through which they really got to know each other for the first time.

Only after 1945, they both admit now, did their real marriage begin. Before, each had nursed his own plans in solitude, now they discussed everything together. They tried to please each other with little attentions. Social life no longer interested them; they hardly saw even friends. They lacked the means to maintain themselves on their old level. Also, many of their old friends had shunned them in their time of need, and they felt no desire to see such people.

"What about politics?" I asked Herr Blumel. But he didn't want to have anything more to do with politics—this, with a gesture of deprecation. He had never given particular thought to why he was active in the Nazi party; for him it had been no more than the duty of any upstanding German. Then came de-Nazification, and he suddenly saw people hauled up for judgment who had been untouchable the day before. Who could guarantee that the wind wouldn't veer again one day, and that support of one party or another wouldn't once more lead to ostracism? So hands off politics. Blumel had only one ideal left; to work diligently, and keep on working, in order to win back his old standard of living.

HERR BLUMEL'S is not an isolated case, and his gesture of deprecation towards the subject of politics was made, in effect, by millions of other Germans when they cast their votes in the recent elections. A

THE trouble outsiders have in interpreting events in Germany was made very evident by the recent German elections. Adenauer's triumph may indeed have set at rest fears that the Germans, after their total defeat, would embrace some form of extremism, either of the right or the left. But did it mean a real advance on the road to democracy? PETER SCHMID knows Germany as well as perhaps any outsider could hope to, having been born (1916) and educated in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, where he was editor of the famous Zürich magazine *Weltwoche* before embarking on his present career as roving correspondent and travel-writer. Since 1947 he has traveled throughout Europe, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and has been in the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and South America. He is now on his first visit to this country. Mr. Schmid's two most recent books are *Spanish Impressions* and *Neighbors of Heaven* (on South America), both published in German. Irving Pfefferblit has translated the present article, which marks Mr. Schmid's second appearance in these pages. (His first was with an article on Indonesia in our June 1951 number.)

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recently published book by a Hamburg sociologist, Helmut Schelsky, bears this out. The book contains more than its title, *Changes in the Present-Day German Family* (Ardey Verlag, Dortmund), would indicate. Its detailed studies of nearly two hundred families from all over West Germany add up to a description of the changes in every walk of postwar German life, and supply much material for political interpretation.

It was predicted in 1945 that the terrible, almost ferocious struggle for existence during the hungry years immediately after the war would produce a wholly demoralized generation, a generation without values or scruples, without restraints in any sphere, professional, sexual, or political. And the consequences of this would be an even more radical Nazism, or else German Bolshevism. What has happened instead? Germany has become one of the most bourgeois and conservative countries in all Europe. Herr Blumel's experience has been universal; the ties of family have grown stronger; marriages are more tightly knit. Young people hardly think of free love any more, but want to get married as soon as possible, find a place to live in, and have children.

All this was not anticipated because people looked to 1918 for a precedent. The slogans of that era were liberation from traditional bonds, the search for pleasure, faith in radical progress and revolution—all the things that are so spectacularly absent today. The reason for the difference lies in the wholly different situation that the German people—and, to some extent, all Europe—face today. Until 1914-18, bourgeois society had shut its ears to the tremors, consequent upon industrialization and urbanization, that were rocking its foundations. Then, in spite of the revolutionary years that immediately followed on 1918, the old forms of the Kaiser's Reich passed over into the Weimar Republic more or less intact. And the younger generation rebelled against these restored forms, which they considered obsolete—their rebellion being all the more noisy because these forms had never really been threatened. But the Second World War came to a Germany that had undergone a radical transformation at the hands of National Socialism, in which the individual had been leveled and made even more anonymous than before. Then followed the loss of German territory in the East, the expulsion of the German inhabitants of that territory, the declassing suffered by millions of other Germans, the partition of what was left of Germany into East and West, and the forced detention of tens of thousands of German soldiers in Russia. In short, what the Nazi regime had left of the old patterns, and what it had itself newly created, were alike cast into the crucible.

In 1945 the German found himself left, so to speak, with a clean slate as far as social values were concerned, and he had to react differently from in 1918. Instinctively, he grasped at and clung to those values which, amid the general breakdown, could at least still be realized in private life. The family group, breasting chaos, became the basic form of society—a kind of Noah's Ark in which you lived out the Deluge in the company of those closest to you, those very few others you could safely rely on. Whereas the unrestraint after 1918 was a revolt against social forms that had outlived themselves, the "restoration" after 1945 is an anxious effort to reestablish ties that have again become indispensable to social life.

Those who diagnosed this "restoration" as merely part of the process of convalescence have learned better now—or rather, worse—from Herr Schelsky's study. The old family was, as they used to say, the "germ cell of society": within its authoritarian structure children were taught the forms of human intercourse which they would have to apply when their consciousness broadened out to society at large. But the present-day German family is no longer exactly such a "germ cell of society," it is rather a bomb-shelter protecting its members from contact with society. What we began by observing in the Blumel family, namely the abandonment of old social contacts and a withdrawal into isolation, holds true not

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only for refugees from the East and for declassed elements, but also for most "normal" families in the Germany of today.

This tendency toward an isolated private life has its effects on German politics. The large turn-out of voters in the recent national elections should not disguise the fact that the average German looks at public affairs with indifference and skepticism. This, as we have seen in Herr Blumel's case, is part of the aftermath of Nazism and de-Nazification. Many, many Germans shun politics for fear of being held personally responsible for the acts of the whole community. The springs of social idealism, the hope of improving society by collective action—these have dried up. "The same is true," writes Herr Schelsky, "of the interest and approval that are accorded to the fundamental democratic rights of the individual—like freedom of opinion, of belief, of science, the press, and so on. To take this affirmation [on the part of the average German] of the citizen's right to freedom for a steadfast faith in democracy, ripened by political experience, would be just as false as to do the opposite and take the prevalent skepticism and indifference toward public life for a fundamental aversion to democracy. The personal liberties of the individual are acknowledged and affirmed because they protect the sphere of the individual's private life from the claims of political and governmental power, and thus meet the desire for depoliticalization and political neutralization. That these liberties are intended to serve as a basis for participation in public life, that they can only be maintained and defended by vigorous political and public activity, is not comprehended by those who approve of them. . . ."

Another sociological study of the German family, done independently of Schelsky's by G. Würzbacher (*Main Types of Contemporary German Family Life*), comes to similar conclusions. Of 164 families studied, members of 56 lived lives confined wholly to their immediate families; the members of 64 took some part in small, private social groups outside their families; and only 34, or about a fifth, were interested in public affairs. The state was viewed by more than two-thirds of these Germans as an alien bureaucracy unrelated to themselves, and something it was best to keep at a distance from, in any case, by burying yourself in private life.

But might not this development be all to the good? Might it not act to check those totalitarian tendencies in the state that have brought so much misery to Germany—and the world—in the past? Might it not encourage the kind of critical individualism that marks political life in England and America, an individualism that interests itself in politics precisely because one wants to keep the state at arm's length? I hardly think that such a hope is warranted. The German attitude towards politics is still as unnatural, as unreal, as it ever was. Politics was never "refined" in Germany, and decent people preferred to stay away from it. For this reason, the late plunge into totalitarianism is felt in retrospect by many Germans as something passionate, bitter, yet luxurious, like a wanton sin of the flesh. Contrition for such wantonness has not inclined Germans toward Anglo-Saxon habits in politics, but rather toward those of the Mediterraneans, especially the Spanish. The Spaniard's lack of political instinct leaves his family as the only real form of community, and his politics usually degenerates into an anarchic and bloody struggle of all against all. Therefore it takes an authoritarian regime (not, however, a totalitarian one—and neither Franco nor Salazar is totalitarian) to keep the peace; external force has to bind together a people lacking inner cohesion. It would not be difficult to anticipate similar developments in Germany.

(For the caliber of the German politician himself, as compared with the Weimar days, has fallen rather than risen—not least of all because of the terrible blood-letting Hitler inflicted on his democratic opponents. "There are only about ten people among all our parliamentary representatives that are good for anything," a Socialist deputy to the

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Bundestag told me, a man famous for his brutal frankness. "And we're always being borne down by the pressure of our own nonentities. They hate any and everybody intelligent. Their hatred pours in on us at fraction meetings like a flood breaking through a dam.")

Within the German family itself, things have changed too. Certainly mutual dependence often leads to a strengthening of human bonds. But at the same time it can narrow and over-specialize them. Because the family has become an emergency organism whose prime aim is social survival and, even more, social recovery, material concerns have become the most important factor of family life. The whole spiritual fabric that used to adorn the old German family has not only been shaken but in many cases has disappeared. The old ideal of a humanistic education has broken down into professional specialization. Time and money are often lacking for cultural pursuits. The religious revival that, immediately after the war, seemed to be giving new life to the churches has already waned, and love itself has become frighteningly rational and unromantic.

Most of what was written about Germany in the weeks before and after the elections, not only abroad but in the German press itself, was no less patently false than what was written everywhere on the same subject in the immediate postwar period. Both Germans and non-Germans still tend to see things under the old categories, and thus they spy Nazism lurking everywhere, unchanged under the democratic mask and waiting only for another chance to raise its head. This—and the nervousness of the British occupation authorities—explains why Werner Naumann, onetime state secretary in Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, could be taken for a political figure of importance.

Naumann, having escaped the trials at Nuremberg and de-Nazification thanks to an assumed name, had begun, through the import-export business of an old friend, to try to make contact with all kinds of people he hoped would support a revival of Nazi political ideas. He was far from conceiving of himself as a political force, however, and did not dream as yet of a frontal attack on German democracy. "It won't be done," he wrote in the diary he kept in imitation of his old mentor, "with the *Badenweiler Marsch* and a new flag. We need a new style, new slogans, new concepts and a new language if we want to reform our people politically and move ahead. To reflect our position faithfully, these must be severely objective, meant in earnest, not clamorous or exaggerated for the sake of propaganda." Naumann wanted no mass movement; his goal was the creation of a "sworn brotherhood," a kind of leavening elite through which the forms of the Nazism of tomorrow would be created. For this reason he rebuffed both General Guderian and certain elements in the right wing of the Free Democratic party when they made approaches to him (at least this is his story, if not that of his rather inept co-defendants), implying that such a coalition of the right was still premature. He preferred rather to infiltrate those parties that, without being disloyal to the Bonn constitution were yet "open on the right."

A few weeks before the elections, Naumann was set free because the incriminating material turned out to be too meager to justify his further detention. Having been presented with the unearned halo of a national martyr, Naumann saw himself catapulted onto the political stage. The German Reich party, successor to General Remer's banned Socialist Reich party, put him forward as its leading candidate, together with Hans Grimm, the Nazi writer, and Ernst Rudel, one of Hitler's war aces, who had received Perón's personal permission to leave his post as military advisor in Argentina for this purpose. The German press aimed its heaviest batteries at this trio, and, to put a stop to Naumann's activities, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, under whose jurisdiction he came, rushed him through special de-Nazification proceedings that debarred him from public office. A neutral observer could hardly avoid the impression that those in power were at bottom altogether unsure of them-

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selves; some sort of optical illusion had inflated a third-rate Nazi into a new Hitler.

Hitler, the affair showed, is still so frighteningly close to most Germans that they are not yet able to consider him with any objectivity. Whatever vestiges of Nazism remain in their consciousness are repressed like shameful desires, and therefore any political movement seeking to link itself with National Socialism has to be crushed from the very outset. The Germans are swayed by a very strong need to stand before themselves and the rest of the world as perfect democrats—a need the like of which I have found only in Japan, where democratic sentiment rests on an equally precarious spiritual basis. And so the target is always being overshot. Another example was when a Bremen court judged a Senator guilty of slandering General Remer—he had accused him of desertion during the war—yet refused to punish him, on the ground that Remer had belonged to the forbidden Socialist Reich party—something that had nothing to do with what the Senator had said about Remer. This desire for political respectability unquestionably accounts for the catastrophic failure of the extreme right in the recent German elections.

NEVERTHELESS, the recent election campaign did leave one with a certain feeling of discomfort. Only the politicians were excited. The public watched apathetically and, in large part, with mild contempt. Like actors trying to get a response from an impassive audience, the politicians forced their propaganda to the point of hysteria. The Christian Democrats had the best time of it. It was the party of the Chancellor, the man who had led West Germany out of the humiliation of defeat back into the community of nations, and made it a sought-after ally. But it was by no means easy to reduce this party to an ideological common denominator. It had inherited the mantle of the old Catholic center party but it was no longer Catholic. Its second-ranking figure, the President of the Bundestag, Ehlers—in whom many see Adenauer's successor—is a former Protestant church official from Oldenburg, and the CDU has achieved a strong position in arch-Protestant regions like Swabia and North Germany, actually winning its most clear-cut electoral successes in Protestant Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, and Hessen. "The enemies of the good Protestant," Ehlers explained to me, "are not the Catholics but the representatives of the secular world, the Liberals and the Social Democrats; in the fight against these, the Catholics are our allies. This is the reason for our exceptional tolerance of confessional differences within the CDU."

In the strictly political sphere, too, the CDU is a coalition party. Though it represents the conservative business class in large part, labor leaders like Karl Arnold, who heads the cabinet, represent a progressive wing within the party's fold. All these divergent tendencies within the CDU are held together by the personality of Adenauer—almost by that factor *alone*, and no one can imagine how they will be kept in line after his death (he is, after all, seventy-seven). And the CDU had to fight its election campaign on the basis of his personal prestige. His strong, somewhat arrogant features looked down from every billboard: "Germany votes for Adenauer," they said, and no other words were necessary.

The role that Adenauer's image, already beginning to be wreathed with the mystique of a leadership cult, played against the Social Democrats was decisive. With Schumacher's death, good old Papa Ollenhauer had become head of the party, and he found himself in the unenviable position of being forced, as the "rival *Führer*," to throw the full—but unfortunately purely physical—weight of his personality into the scales. His round face beamed from posters that offered an almost ludicrous alternative: "Not Adenauer" (with the name written in a wavering, senile script) "but Ollenhauer" (in strong, resolute characters). But one had only to attend the rallies of the two different parties to see where the personal strength really lay. Adenauer has never for a moment hidden his deep contempt for people, and precisely because of his arrogance he appealed deeply

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to the faith in authority of the German people. But even Ollenhauer's sincerest friends could not help being bored by him.

IN THE face of this human handicap the Socialists could have won, or at least held their own, only by a clear, unambiguous statement of their program and goals. It was their misfortune that they possessed neither. The leaders of the party had grown up under the sign of the class war, and thought they had to hold fast to this slogan in spite of the fact that conditions had changed completely. For the German worker is no longer a "proletarian," and least of all does he want to be appealed to as one.

Professor Ludwig Erhard's economic policy, whose currency reform freed West Germany's economy from hampering controls, produced a boom that has lifted the country out of bitterest poverty into a prosperity which the workers share in, their standard of living now exceeding that of pre-war days. True, the average German worker can't afford a car yet, but he has a motorcycle, and lately a frigidaire has come within his means. Obviously, things are improving; every worker can see that merely by looking around him. How can he respond, then, to a party whose propaganda tells him that he's leading a dog's life? (Things are bad only for those Germans left out of the boom—people with fixed incomes, and the unemployed, whose numbers have steadily decreased to less than one million now, in spite of the constant influx of refugees from the Soviet Zone.) How can he respond at this time to propaganda that keeps harping on nationalization and a planned economy? The Adenauer side could point to the misery to which the population of the USSR had been reduced by the economic policies of its Communist masters; and the general hatred of the Communists, who invoke the same Marxist antecedents as the Social Democrats, could only hurt the latter. Erhard's economy had brought full stomachs: who would want to change that?

The position of the Socialists on foreign policy was just as hopeless. Schumacher had envisaged a broadening out of his party's base to include the middle classes as well as the workers—with the example of the British Labor party in mind—and to this end he chose the issue of nationalism. The result was a paradoxical situation that saw a party, part of whose basic heritage was the ideal of international brotherhood, deserting this ideal at the very moment when its realization seemed in sight. And the reward for this betrayal was practically zero, because nationalism no longer has—or does not yet have—the power to sway Germans. This paradox was intensified by the fact that the Free Democrats and the German party, which proclaimed themselves the champions of German national tradition, were yet compelled by their loyalty to Adenauer's person to stand behind him in support of European integration and the Atlantic Community.

It would be wrong, however, to interpret this stand by the German nationalists as simply an accidental consequence of a strategy of coalition. German bourgeois nationalism is still vigorous, but the continuing partition of Germany has forced it to shift its position radically. Not only has the presence of the Red Army on the Elbe made it more anti-Communist than ever, but it has also required German nationalism to think, above all and at any price, of defense. Only Europe as a whole, with the Americans in reserve, can ward off the Red danger. And perhaps not merely ward it off.

A prominent representative of this kind of nationalism, a radio commentator, admitted quite frankly to me that the recovery of the German East would be possible only through war. When the European veneer peels off these German nationalist supporters of European integration, the old Hitlerian idea of a crusade against Bolshevism emerges. (It is interesting, in this connection, to note Senator McCarthy's popularity among these people. The radio commentator just mentioned knows the Senator personally, and has presented his charges to the German radio-listener as the undiluted truth.) Nazism, insofar as it still haunts German minds, has ceased to limit itself to

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Germany, but looks to the whole world for support, and if another Hitler appears it will be one who will seek to rally many nations behind him, not just Germans.*

But this nationalism in the name of Europe, or even of the whole Western world, still lacks real political force. It is there only as a tendency. Germans are shocked and saddened to see the distrust with which the rest of Europe is greeting their economic and social recovery, and this shakes their faith in the possibility of realizing the European idea. The Germans want to make a new start: why don't the others welcome that? Perhaps because the desire of the Germans for a united Europe is seen too plainly as being, among other things, a kind of salve they want to apply to the bad conscience they have for past misdeeds. Good intentions toward the future are supposed to wipe out the evil facts of the past.

The German desire to forget the past is unmistakable and, with it, the hope that all others will do the same. Warsaw? Bergen-Belsen? Auschwitz? Didn't the Americans raze German cities with their bombs? Didn't the French let thousands of German prisoners of war starve? Not to mention what the Russians did—. The Germans see their guilt more as a universal than a national one. Of course, they have a share in that universal guilt—but only a share. And so with upright hearts they pray that most dangerous of prayers: "Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Or rather, expressed more colloquially: "Forget about it!"

But I do think that one of the ugliest of all the ugly ingredients of Nazism is on the point of disappearing in Germany: I mean anti-Semitism. Among those whom the Germans now want to embrace, after so much suffering "in common," are the Jews too. During my last trip through Germany I heard hardly one anti-Semitic remark of the old, spiteful kind. Not that anybody was beating his breast in remorse. Here too, good intentions toward the future are supposed to serve as a kind of absolution for the past. Hitler's massacre of the Jews is thought of less as a sin and crime than as a terrible and, above all, *unnecessary* error.

Compared with the new conception of European nationalism, the isolationist nationalism of the German Social Democrats is completely out of date—and confused into the bargain. The principal difference between Adenauer's position and the Socialist party's is that the latter gives the reunion of West and East Germany priority over every other issue, national or international, while Adenauer makes European integration the prior one and sees German reunion as its logical outcome. The Social Democrats think, with reason, that the entrance of the Bonn republic into the European Defense Community would make it very unlikely that the Russians would evacuate the Eastern Zone. Adenauer's counter-argument, to the effect that the Russians, once faced with a strong Western Europe, would come to terms, disarm, and give up the Eastern Zone, is highly implausible. More convincing, on the other hand, is his warning to Germans not to exaggerate the strength of their position in international politics; the danger of becoming a mere bargaining counter between the great powers and of being sacrificed in an international horse trade requires them to seek the firm friendship of the strongest of these powers, the United States. The Social Democrats assured the public constantly that they, too, wanted to cooperate with the West, and that a reunited Germany would of necessity join the Atlantic Pact—which made their differences with Adenauer shrink to a question of procedure.

It was only a few days before the elections that an outsider, one Erler, a member of the Bonn parliament, came forward with a real alternative to the Chancellor's line: he asserted that a reunited Germany would have to adopt a policy of clear-cut neutrality. In any case, the whole reunification problem had become so complicated by now that only a fraction of the electorate could even begin

*See also L. Poliakov's "Launching the New Fascist International" in Commentary for November 1952.—Ed.

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to understand it. Therefore the confused position of the Socialists could only work in Adenauer's favor.

It is true that the Chancellor's position, too, underwent essential changes in the weeks before the elections. Earlier he had been reproached, deservedly, for showing a fundamental lack of interest in German unification. Adenauer, as a Rhinelander, is much closer to Latin and Catholic tradition than to the Slavic tendency that stamps the German East. As mayor of Cologne after the First World War, he had not been above flirting with the Separatists who wanted to create an independent Rhineland under French auspices. And when, later, he sat in the Reichstag as a Centrist deputy he never in his heart recognized Berlin as the capital of Germany: "Now we return to Germany," he is supposed to have sighed once to a colleague as they boarded a train back to the Rhineland. For him the real Germany —the old German provinces of the Roman Empire—ended at the frontier that Rome had held against the wild German tribes to the east, and fate has decreed that this same frontier once again divides a Western from an Eastern Germany.

Now Adenauer has, of course, always stood for unification, but so tepidly that his sincerity was questioned. But after the uprising of June 17 in the Eastern Zone a new note of passion entered his speeches on this issue. And if his first reception of Churchill's proposal for four-power negotiations to work out a new Locarno had been cool to the point of rejection, he now became the loudest of all in calling for them, and began on his own to seek a solution to the problem of reconciling the Soviet Union's need for security with the realization of the European Defense Community. This capacity of Adenauer's to change his mind offered, to German voters, an attractive contrast to the confusion of the Social Democrats.

But there is no doubt that the importance to the West Germans of reunion with Eastern Germany has been greatly exaggerated. When the news of the Berlin uprising broke on June 17, there was excitement in the Bundestag, in government bureaus, and in editorial offices, but not a trace of it was to be felt in the streets—streets where moments of political crisis used to engender an atmosphere heavy with collective anticipation. This time no one said: "Now it's happened! Now it's beginning!" The newspapers indignantly reported cases of particularly shocking apathy, like that of the teacher who burst into his classroom that same day shouting, "Have you heard the awful news? Our soccer team was beaten!" But any reader of Herr Schelsky's work would not have been surprised by this apathy. Passionate longing for German unification is largely confined to politicians and editors. Audiences will applaud enthusiastically when it is demanded from a speaker's platform, or in print, but the public feels no really burning concern.

That is why Adenauer won. He had the powerful influence of the United States behind him, and he had, besides, shown himself flexible enough to change his ideas to fit a changed situation. The Germans voted for this realist. But one should not interpret his triumph as evidence that the majority of West Germans have enthusiastically embraced Europe and the European Defense Community. It is just that they recognize where the smallest risk lies. There is no idea in sight for which they would be in a mood to fight. Freedom, democracy, and all the other good things that fell into their laps in 1945 after the Nazi collapse, provide—I can only refer once more to Schelsky—a pleasant framework within which to retreat into private life, but nothing more.

If West Germany looks from the outside like a mighty giant amid all the chronic invalids of Western Europe, internally it is no less eaten away with political nihilism.

On the other hand, the laments of those pessimists who saw in the election results a rebirth of the "leader principle" and the one-party state seemed just as excessive. Yet from a certain angle these pessimists are right: the "Hispanization" of Germany, the disintegration of the political community into egoistic little cliques, does favor the growth of au-

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thoritarianism, and Adenauer is not the man to find the temptation to authoritarianism easy to resist. Even during the last Bundestag he treated both opposition and allies with a high-handedness that has become notorious. Habitually, he made important decisions on his own, without consulting his colleagues or the responsible department heads. German diplomats abroad complained especially that their reports were not even read, that Adenauer improvised his international policies from the perspective of Bonn, and used personal envoys who acted over their heads.

Is Adenauer a great statesman? Churchill compared him with Bismarck (no doubt not without the motive of encouraging him to adopt Bismarck's conception of a correct German foreign policy as one that in looking toward the West did not forget the East), and this comparison may hold good as regards the foxy shrewdness with which Adenauer operates, but not as regards his originality or creativeness. Nothing he has ever said betrays a capacity for more than tactical agility. His travels outside Germany have served but to satisfy a naive tourist's curiosity; they did not give him a deeper understanding of any of the foreign peoples he visited. (When he was in the United States he preferred to make a trip to see the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco rather than get in even fleeting touch with such an important factor in American life as the trade union movement.) In the recent elections he descended to petty, totally unfounded slanders against political opponents; a local court had officially to forbid him to continue circulating such statements. He told an American reporter that he knew that the Swiss government was lowering taxes for Swiss exporters to enable them to underbid German competition. This happened to be completely untrue, but Adenauer said, "I know it for certain because my son-in-law told me." This statement is typical of how the Chancellor sees everything, even political questions of international scope, from the narrow, intimate perspective of his family and neighborhood. Down at bottom he remains, Chancellor or no, a mayor. . . .

The Chancellor's triumph—which was a little too triumphant even for the taste of many of his friends—will no doubt increase his self-assurance. In the days right after the elections a perceptible shudder ran through the editorial offices of all the papers and radio stations that had defied the Chancellor in any way. A new and severer press law is in preparation, penalizing slanderous utterances about public authorities and the leakage of political news or information. Other measures, introduced the day after the elections, are aimed at the German Federation of Trade Unions, whose membership, being nine-tenths Social Democratic, had rather recklessly abandoned their neutrality to campaign for the Socialists. Now Adenauer has demanded that the Federation's Christian wing, which stands closest to the CDU, be given a larger role in the determination of the organization's policy, though it has only 10 per cent of the six million members of the Federation behind it. The German trade union movement is thus threatened with the predominance of a government-sponsored minority within its own ranks, or else a division into competing groups that obtained before 1933 and eased the way for Hitler.

All these tendencies will bring with them a further weakening of the political equilibrium between left and right in Germany. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the ruling CDU party is anything but homogeneous; rivalry among its component groups will keep it from following any too single-tracked a policy. The Protestants have already been alarmed by the demand made in certain Catholic circles for an openly clerical policy. At the same time many prominent Christian trade-unionists have set themselves resolutely against the threatened split in the Trade Union Federation, fearing that when that happens the progressive and labor wing of the CDU will be sacrificed to the conservative wing of the party. As it looks now, Adenauer will be kept in check by the necessity for tacking between the opposing tendencies inside his own party.

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MY WAR WITH HERSH RASSEYNER

A Story

CHAIM GRADE

IN 1937 I returned to Bialystok, several years after I had been a student in the Novaredok Yeshiva of the Mussarists, a movement which gives special importance to the ethical and ascetic elements in Judaism. When I came back I found many of my old schoolmates still there. A few even came to my lecture one evening. Others visited me secretly, to keep the head of the Yeshiva from finding out. I could see that their poverty had brought them suffering and that the fire of their youthful zeal had slowly burned itself out. They continued to observe all the laws and usages meticulously, but the weariness of spiritual wrestlings lay upon them. For years they had tried to tear out of their hearts the desire for the pleasures of life, and at last they realized they had lost the war with themselves. They had not overcome the evil urge.

THERE was one I kept looking for all the time and could not find, my former schoolmate Hersh Rasseyner. He was a dark young man with bright, downcast eyes. I did not meet him, but heard that he kept to his garret in solitude and did not even come to the Yeshiva.

Once we met unexpectedly in the street. He was walking with his eyes lowered, as is the custom with the Novaredok Mussarists; they do not wish to be "eye to eye" with the world. But he saw me anyway. He put his arms behind him, thrusting his hands into his sleeves, so that he would not have to shake hands with me. The closer he came, the higher rose his head. When we finally stood face to face, he looked at me intently. He was so moved his nostrils seemed to quiver—but he kept silent.

Among the Mussarists when you ask, How are you? the question means, What is the state of your religious life? Have you risen in spirituality? But I had forgotten and asked quite simply, "Hersh Rasseyner, how are you?"

Hersh moved back a little, looked me over from head to toe, saw that I was modishly dressed, and shrugged. "And how are you, Chaim Vilner? My question, you see, is more important."

My lips trembled and I answered hotly, "Your question, Hersh Rasseyner, is no question at all. I do what I have to."

Right there, in the middle of the street, he cried out, "Do you think, Chaim Vilner, that by running away from the Yeshiva you have saved yourself? You know the saying among us: Whoever has learned Mussar can have no enjoyment in his life. You will always be deformed, Chaim Vilner. You will remain a cripple the rest of your life. You write godless verses and they reward you by patting you on the cheek. Now they're stuffing you with applause as they would stuff a goose with grain. They make a fuss about you, you're treated like a child born in his parents' old age. But later you'll see, when you've begun to go to their school, oh won't the worldly ones beat you! Which of you isn't hurt by criticism? Is there one of you really so self-confident that he doesn't go around begging for some authority's approval? Is there one of you who's prepared to publish his book anonymously? The big thing with you people is that your name should be seen and known. You have given up our tranquillity of spirit for what? For passions you will never be able to satisfy and for doubts you will never be able to answer, no matter how much you suffer."

When he had spoken his fill, Hersh Rasseyner began to walk away with a quick, energetic stride. But I had once been a Mussarist too, so I ran after him.

"Hersh, listen to me now. No one knows better than I how torn you are. You're proud

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WE KNOW of no story that so movingly and intimately evokes the inner intellectual and spiritual struggle of the East European generation that lived through the Hitler ordeal as this by CHAIM GRADE, one of the leading Yiddish poets of today. He was born in Vilna, Poland, in 1910, and studied at various yeshivas until 1922, among them that of the Mussarists, the ascetic sect described in his story. He was a member of the Young Vilna writers' group before the war; since 1948 he has been living in the United States. Mr. Grade is the author of numerous volumes of verse; this year will see the publication (in Yiddish) of his first book of stories. "My War with Hersh Rasseyner" was translated by Milton Himmelfarb and will be included in *The Treasury of Yiddish Fiction,* edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, which Viking Press will publish in 1954.

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of yourself because you don't care if the whole street laughs at you for wearing your *tzitzit* down to your ankles. You've talked yourself into believing that the cloth with the woolen fringes is a partition between you and the world. You despise yourself because you're afraid you may find favor in the eyes of the world, that Potiphar's wife. You fear you won't have the strength to tear yourself away like the righteous Joseph. So you flee from temptation and think the world will run after you. But when you see that the world doesn't run after you, you become angry and cry out: Nobody enjoys life. You want to console yourself with that idea. When you live in solitude in your garret, that's because you would rather have nothing at all than take the crumb that life throws you. Your modesty is pride, not self-denial.

"And who told you that I seek pleasure? I seek a truth you don't have. For that matter, I didn't run away, I simply returned to my own street—to Yatkev Street in Vilna. I love the porters with their backs broken from carrying their burdens; the artisans pouring sweat at their workbenches; the market women who would cut off a finger to give a poor man a crust of bread. But you scold the hungry for being sinners, and all you can tell them is to repent. You laugh at people who work because you say they don't trust in God. But you live on what others have made. Women exhausted with work bring you something to eat, and in return you promise them the world to come. Hersh Rasseyner, you have long since sold your share of the world to come to those poor women."

Hersh Rasseyner gave a start and disappeared. I returned to Vilna with a burden removed from my conscience. In the disputation with the Mussarist I myself began to understand why I had left them. If at the time, I said to myself, I didn't know why and where I was going, someone else thought it for me, someone stronger than I. That someone else stronger than I was—my generation and my environment.

II

Two years passed. War broke out between Germany and Poland. The western Ukraine and western White Russia were taken over by the Red Army. After they had been in Vilna a few weeks, the Russians announced that they were giving the city back to the Lithuanians. To Vilna there began to come refugees who did not want to remain under Soviet rule. The Novaredok Yeshiva came also. Meanwhile, the Soviets remained. Hunger raged in the city. Every face was clouded with fear because of the arrests carried out at night by NKVD agents. My heart was heavy. Once I was standing in line for a ration of bread. Suddenly I saw Hersh Rasseyner.

I had heard that in the meanwhile he had married. His face was framed with a little black beard, his gait more restrained, his clothing more presentable. I was so glad to see him that I left my place in the line, pushed through the crowd, and came up to him.

He spoke little and was very cautious. I understood why. He did not trust me and was afraid of trouble. I could see that he was trying to make up his mind whether to speak to me. But when he saw how despondent I was, he hid his mouth with his hand, as though to conceal his twisted smile, and a gleam of derision came into his eye. With his head he motioned toward the bridge, on which were parked a few tanks with Red Army soldiers.

"Well, Chaim," Hersh said to me quietly, "are you satisfied now? Is this what you wanted?"

I tried to smile and answered just as quietly, "Hersh, I bear no more responsibility for all that than you do for me."

He shook himself and pronounced a few sharp, cutting words, seeming to forget his fear: "You're wrong, Chaim, I do bear responsibility for you." He retreated a few steps and motioned with his eyes to the Red Army soldiers, as though to say: And you bear responsibility for them.

III

Nine more years passed, years of war and destruction, during which I wandered across Russia, Poland, and Western Europe. In 1948, on a summer afternoon, I was riding in the Paris Métro. Couples stood close together. Short Frenchwomen, as though fainting, hung by the side of their blackhaired lovers.

I saw a familiar face. Until then it had been concealed by someone's shoulder, and only when the couples had had to move a little did that corner of the car open up. My heart began to pound. Could he really be alive? Hadn't he been in Vilna under the German occupation? When I returned to the ruins of my home in 1945 I did not see him or hear of him. Still, those were the same eyes, the same obstinately upturned nose; only the broad black beard had begun to turn gray. It was astonishing to me that he could look at the couples so calmly, and that a good-natured smile lit up his melancholy glance. That was not like him. But after a moment I noticed that there was a faraway look in his eyes. He really did not see the people on the train. He was dressed neatly, in a long cloak and a clean white shirt buttoned at the

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throat, without a necktie. I thought to myself: He never wore ties. This more than anything else convinced me that it was he.

I pushed my way to him through the passengers and blurted out, "Excuse me, aren't you Reb Hersh Rasseyner?"

He looked at me, wrinkled his forehead and smiled. "Ah, Chaim, Chaim, is that you? *Sholom aleichem!* How are you?"

I could tell that this time when Hersh Rasseyner asked, "How are you?" he did not mean what he had meant eleven years before. Then his question was angry and derisive. Now he asked the question quietly, simply. It came from his heart and it showed concern, as for an old friend.

We got into a corner and he told me briefly that he had been in a camp in Latvia. Now he was in Germany, at the head of a Yeshiva in Salzheim.

"The head of a Yeshiva in a camp in Germany? And who are your students, Reb Hersh?"

He smiled. "Do you think that the Holy One is so to speak an orphan? We still have lads, praise be to the Almighty, who study Torah."

He told me that he had been in the camp with about ten pupils. He had drawn them close to him and taught them Jewishness. Because they were still only children and very weak he helped them in their work. At night they used to gather about his cot and all would recite Psalms together. There was a doctor in the camp who used to say that he would give half his life to be able to recite Psalms too. But he couldn't. He lacked faith, poor man.

I was happy to meet him and I preferred to avoid a debate, so I merely asked, "And what brings you here so often? Are you in business?"

"Of course we're in business." He stroked his beard with satisfaction. "Big business. We bring Yeshiva people here and send them off to Israel and America. We take books back from here. With the help of the Almighty, I have even flown twice to Morocco."

"Morocco? What did you do there, Reb Hersh?"

"Brought back students from the Moroccan Jews, spoke in their synagogue."

"And how did you talk to them? You don't know Arabic or French."

"The Almighty helps. What difference does it make how you speak? The main thing is *what* you speak."

Unexpectedly he began to talk about me. "How will it be with you, Chaim? It's time for you to start thinking about repentance. We're nearer rather than farther."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, drawing out his words in a chant, "that we have both lived out more than half our lives. What will become of Reb Chaim?" He strongly accented the word Reb. "Where are you voyaging? Together with them, perhaps?" His eyes laughed at the young couples. "Will you get off where they do? Or do you still believe in this merciless world?"

"And you, Reb Hersh," I asked in sudden irritation, "do you still believe in particular providence? You say that the Holy One is not as it were an orphan. But we are orphans. A miracle happened to you, Reb Hersh, and you were saved. But how about the rest? Can you still believe?"

"Of course I believe," said Hersh Rasseyner, separating his hands in innocent wonder. "You can touch particular providence, it's so palpable. But perhaps you're thinking of the kind of man who has faith that the Almighty is to be found only in the pleasant places of this world but is not to be found, God forbid, in the desert and wastelands? You know the rule: just as a man must make a blessing over the good so must he make a blessing over evil. We must fall before the greatness—"

"What do you want, Reb Hersh?" I interrupted. "Shall I see the greatness of God in the thought that only He could cause such destruction, not flesh and blood? You're outdoing the Psalms you used to recite on your bed in the concentration camp. The Psalmist sees the greatness of God in the fact that the sun rises every day, but you see miracles even in catastrophes."

"Without any doubt," Hersh Rasseyner answered calmly, "I see everywhere, in everything, at every moment, particular providence. I couldn't remain on earth for one minute without the thought of God. How could I stand it without Him in this murderous world?"

"But I won't say that His judgment is right. I can't!"

"You can," said Hersh Rasseyner, putting a friendly hand on my shoulder, "you can—gradually. First the penitent understands that the world can't be without a Guide. Then he understands that the Guide is the God of Israel and that there is no other power besides Him to help Him lead the world. At last he recognizes that the world is in Him, as we read: 'There is no place void of Him.' And if you understood that, Chaim, you would also understand how the Almighty reveals Himself in misfortune as well as in salvation."

Hersh Rasseyner spoke in a warm voice. He did not once take his hand off my shoulder. I felt a great love for him and saw that he had become more pious than ever.

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IV

WE LEFT the Métro near the Jewish quarter, at the rue de Rivoli, and we passed the old city hall, the Hôtel de Ville. In the niches of the walls of the Hôtel de Ville, between the windows, in three rows, stand stone figures, some with a sword, some with a book, some with brush and palette, and some with geometers' instruments.

The Rasseyner saw me looking at the monuments.

He glanced at them out of the corner of his eye and asked, "Who are those idols?"

I explained to him that they were famous Frenchmen: statesmen, heroes, scholars, and artists.

"Reb Hersh," I pleaded with him, "look at those statues. Come closer and see the light streaming from their marble eyes. See how much goodness lies hidden in their stone faces. You call it idolatry, but I tell you that quite literally, I could weep when I walk about Paris and see those sculptures. It's a miracle, after all. How could a human being breathe the breath of life into stone? When you see a living man, you see only one man. But when you see a man poured out in bronze, you see mankind itself. Do you understand me? That one there, for instance, is a poet famous all over the world. The great writer broadens our understanding and stirs our pity for our fellow men. He shows us the nature of the man who can't overcome his desires. He doesn't punish even the wicked man, but sees him according to his afflictions in the war he wages with himself and the rest of the world. You don't say he's right, but you understand that he can't help it. Why are you pulling at your beard with such anger, Reb Hersh?"

He stared at me with burning eyes and cried out, "For shame! How can you say such foolish things? So you could weep when you look at those painted lumps of matter? Why don't you weep about the charred walls which alone remain of the Gaon of Vilna's synagogue? Those *artistes* of yours, those monument-choppers; those poets who sang about their emperors; those tumblers who danced and played before the rulers—did those masters of yours even bother to think that their patron would massacre a whole city and steal all it had, only to buy them, your masters, with gold? Did the prophets flatter kings? Did they take gifts of harlots' wages? And how merciful you are! The writer shows how the wicked man is the victim of his own evil inclinations. I think that's what you said. It's really a pity about the arrogant rebel! He destroys others, and of course he's destroyed too. What a pity! Do you think it's easier to be a good man than an adulterer? But you particularly like to describe the lustful man. You know him better, there's something of him in you artists. If you make excuses for the man who exults in his wickedness, then as far as I'm concerned all your scribbling is unclean and unfit. Condemn the wicked man! Condemn the glutton and drunkard! Do you say he can't help it? He has to help it! You've sung a fine song of praise to the putrid idols, Chaim Vilner."

HERSH RASSEYNER looked into my eyes with the sharp, threatening expression I had seen eleven years earlier, when we met in that Bialystok street. His voice had become hard and resounding. Passers-by stopped and stared at the bearded Jew who shook his finger at the sculptures of the Hôtel de Ville. Hersh did not so much as notice the passers-by. I felt embarrassed in the face of these Frenchmen, smiling and looking at us curiously.

"Don't shout so," I told him irritably. "You really think you have a monopoly on mercy and truth. You're starting where we left off eleven years ago. In Novaredok you always kept the windows closed, but it was still too light for you in the House of Study, so you ran off to your garret. From the garret you went down into a cellar. And from the cellar you burrowed down into a hole under the earth. That's where you could keep your commandment of solitude and that's where you persuaded yourself that a man's thoughts and feelings are like his hair; if he wants to, he can trim his hair and leave nothing but a beard and earlocks—holy thought and pious conduct. You think the world is what you imagine it, and you won't have anything to do with it. You think men are what you imagine them, but you tell them to be the opposite. But even the concentration camps couldn't make men different from what they are. Those who were evil became worse in the camps. Otherwise they might have lived out their lives and not known themselves for what they were, but in the crisis men saw themselves and others undisguised. And when we were all freed, even the better ones among us weren't freed of the poison we'd had to drink behind the barbed wire. Now, if the concentration camp couldn't change men from top to bottom, how can you expect to change them?"

The Rasseyner looked at me with astonishment. The anger that had flared in his eyes died down, though a last flicker of it seemed to remain.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Chaim," he said quietly and reluctantly. "Whoever told you that afflictions as such make people better? It's quite clear that external

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causes can't drag people back to a Jewish life. A man's heart and mind have to be ready.

"If a man didn't come there with a thirst for a higher life, he certainly didn't elevate himself in the concentration camp. But the spiritual man knows that always and everywhere he must keep mounting higher or else he will fall lower. And as for the claim that a man can't change—that is a complete lie. 'In my flesh shall I see God!' The case of Hersh Rasseyner proves that a man can change. I won't tell you a long story about how many lusts I suffered from; how often the very veins in my head almost burst from the boiling of the blood; how many obstinacies I had to tear out of myself. But I knew that whoever denies himself affirms the Master of the World. I knew that the worst sentence that can be passed on a man is that he shall not be able to renounce his old nature. And because I truly wanted to conquer myself, the Almighty helped me."

"You are severe in your judgments," I answered. "You always were, Reb Hersh, if you'll pardon my saying so. You call these wise men putrid idols, but you refuse to see that they lifted mankind out of its bestial state. They weren't butchers of the soul and they didn't talk themselves into believing that human beings can tear their lower urges out of themselves and lop them off. They were very well aware of the hidden root of the human race. They wanted to illuminate men's minds with wisdom, so that men would be able to grow away from their untamed desires. You can't banish shadows with a broom, only with a lighted lamp. These great men—"

Hersh began to laugh so loud that I had to interrupt myself. He immediately stopped laughing and sighed. "I am very tired," he said. "I have been traveling the whole night. But somehow I don't want to leave you. After all, you were once a student at Novaredok; perhaps there is still a spark of the spirit left in you somewhere."

We walked to a bench in silence. On first meeting him I had thought that he had become milder. Now I realized regretfully that his demands upon me and his negation of the whole world had grown greater. I hoped, though, that the pause would ease the tension that had arisen between us and I was in no hurry to be the first to talk again. Hersh, however, wrinkled his forehead as though he were collecting his thoughts, and when we were seated he returned to my last words.

V

"Did you say they were great men? The Germans insist they produced all the great men. I don't know whether they produced the very greatest, but I don't suppose that you worldly people would deny that they did produce learned men. Well, did those philosophers influence their own nation to become better? And the real question is, were the philosophers themselves good men? I don't want you to think that I underestimate their knowledge. During my years in the concentration camp I heard a good deal. There were exceptionally learned men among us, because the German mixed us all together, and in our moments of leisure we used to talk. Later, when with the help of the Almighty I was saved, I myself looked into the books of you worldly people, because I was no longer afraid that they would hurt me. And I was really very much impressed by their ideas. Occasionally I found in their writings as much talent and depth as in our own holy books, if the two may be mentioned in one breath. But they are satisfied with talk! And I want you to believe me when I say that I concede that their poets and scientists wanted to be good. Only—only they weren't able to. And if some did have good qualities, they were exceptions. The masses and even their wise men didn't go any farther than fine talk. As far as talking is concerned, they talk more beautifully than we do.

"Do you know why they weren't able to become better? Because they are consumed with a passion to enjoy life. And since pleasure is not something that can be had by itself, murder arose among them—the pleasure of murder. And that's why they talk such fine talk, because they want to use it for fooling themselves into doing fine deeds. Only it doesn't help. They're satisfied with rhetoric, and the reason is that they care most of all for systems. The nations of the world inherited from the Greeks the desire for order and for pretty systems.

"First of all, they do what they do in public. They have no pleasure from their lusts if they can't sin openly, publicly, so that the whole world will know. They say of us that we're only hypocrites, whereas they do what they want to do publicly. But they like to wage war, not only with others, but with themselves as well, argue with themselves (of course, not too vigorously), even suffer and repent. And when they come to do repentance, the whole world knows about that too. Theirs is the kind of repentance that gives them an intense pleasure; their self-love is so extreme it borders on sickness. They even like their victims, because their victims afford them the pleasure of sinning and the sweet afflictions of regret."

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The Rasseyner had moved away from me to the other end of the bench and had begun to look at me as though it had occurred to him that by mistake he might be talking to a stranger. Then he lowered his head and muttered as though to himself: "Do you remember, that time in Bialystok?" He was silent for a moment and pulled a hair out of his beard as though he were pulling his memories out with it. "Do you remember, Chaim, how you told me on that Bialystok street that we were running away from the world because we were afraid we wouldn't be able to resist temptation? A Mussarist can labor for a lifetime on improving his qualities, yet a single word of criticism will stick in him like a knife. Yes, it's true! All the days of my youth I kept my eyes on the earth, without looking at the world. Then came the German. He took me by my Jewish beard, yanked my head up, and told me to look him straight in the eye. So I had to look into his evil eyes, and into the eyes of the whole world as well. And I saw, Chaim, I saw—you know what I saw. Now I can look at all the idols, and read all the forbidden impurities and contemplate all the pleasures of life, and it won't tempt me any more because now I know the true face of the world. Oh, Reb Chaim, turn and repent! It's not too late. Remember what the prophet Jeremiah said: 'For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'"

Hersh had spoken like a broken man. Tears were dropping on his beard. He rubbed his eyes to hold the tears back, but they continued to flow down his cheeks. I took his hand and said to him with emotion:

"Reb Hersh, you say that I have forsaken a fountain of living waters for a broken cistern. I must tell you that you're wrong. I draw water from the same fountain as you, only with a different vessel. But calm yourself, Reb Hersh.

"You yourself said that you believe that the nations of the world had men of wisdom and men of action who wanted to be good, but couldn't. I think I'm quoting you accurately. What I don't understand is this. It's a basic principle of Judaism that man has free will. The Novaredok people actually maintain that it's possible to attain such a state of perfection that we can do good deeds without the intervention of our physical bodies. Well then, if a man can actually peel the evil husks from himself, as he would peel an onion, how do you answer this question: Since the wise men among the Gentiles wanted to be good, why couldn't they?"

I wasn't able to keep a mocking note of triumph out of my question. It stirred the Rasseyner out of his mournful abstraction. With deliberation he straightened himself and answered gently.

"CHAIM, you seem to have forgotten what you learned at Novaredok, so I'll remind you. In his great love for mankind, the Almighty has endowed us with reason. If our sages, of blessed memory, tell us that we can learn from the animals, surely we can learn from reason as well. And we know that the elders of Athens erected systems of morality according to pure reason. They had many disciples, each with his own school.

"But the question hasn't changed. Did they really live as they taught, or did their systems remain only systems? You must understand once and for all that when his reason is calm and pure, a man doesn't know what he's likely to do when his dark desire overtakes him. A man admires his own wisdom and is proud of his knowledge, but as soon as a little desire begins to stir in him he forgets everything else. Reason is like a dog on a leash who follows sedately in his master's footsteps—until he sees a bitch. With us it's a basic principle that false ideas come from bad qualities. Any man can rationalize whatever he wants to do. Is it true that only a little while ago he was saying the opposite of what he is now saying? He'll tell you he was wrong then. And if he lets you prove to him that he wasn't wrong then, he'll shrug and say: When I want to do something, I can't be an Aristotle. As soon as his desire is sated, his reason revives and he's sorry for what he did. As soon as he feels desire beginning to stir once more, he forgets his reason again. It's as though he were in a swamp; when he pulls one foot out, the other sinks in. There is delicacy in his character, he has a feeling for beauty, he expresses his exalted thoughts in measured words, and there is no flaw in him; then he sees a female ankle and his reason is swallowed up. If a man has no God, why should he listen to the philosopher who tells him to be good? The philosopher himself is cold and gloomy and empty. He is like a man who wants to celebrate a marriage with himself.

"The one way out is this. A man should choose between good and evil only as the Law chooses for him. The Law wants him to be happy. The Law is the only reality in life. Everything else is a dream. Just as the Master of the World showed Moses in the wilderness a fiery tabernacle and said to him: Such a tabernacle shalt thou make for Me, so should a man do in every particular what is done by the fiery Complete Man, who is constructed of

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the letters in which the Law is written. Even when a man understands rationally what he should do, he must never forget that before all else he should do it because the Law tells him to do it. That is how he can guard against the time when his reason will have no power to command him.

"Wait a moment, I'm not through yet. A man may tell himself: I don't live according to reason but according to the Law. And he may feel certain that when temptation comes, he'll look into the appropriate book to see what he should do, and he'll do it. He tells himself that he is free. Actually, the freedom of his choice goes no farther than his wish. Even a man who has a Law won't be able to withstand his temptation if he doesn't watch over himself day and night. He Who knows all secrets knew that our father Abraham would stand ready to sacrifice Isaac; but only after the Binding did the angel say to Abraham: Now I know. Hence we learn that until a man has accomplished what he should, the Law does not trust him. A child has the capacity to grow, but we don't know how tall he'll grow. His father and mother may be as high as the trees, but he may favor a dwarf grandfather. Only by good deeds can we drive out bad deeds. Therefore the Jews cried out at Sinai: 'We will do'—only do, always do; 'and we will obey'—and now we want to know what the Law tells us to do. Without deeds all inquiry is vain.

"That is the outlook and the moral way of 'the old one,' Reb Joseph Yoyzl, may his merit be a shield for us, and thousands of students at Novaredok steeped themselves in it day and night. We labored to make ourselves better, each of us polished and filed his own soul, with examiners gathering evidences of improvement like pearls. But you laughed at us. Then came the German, may his name be blotted out, and murdered our sainted students. And now we're both face to face with the destruction of the Community of Israel. But you are faced with another destruction as well—the destruction of your faith in the world. That's what hurts you and torments you, so you ask me: Why weren't the wise men of the Gentiles able to be good, if they wanted to be good? And you find contradictions in what I said. But the real contradiction you find is not in what I said but in yourself. You thought the world was striving to become better, and you discovered it was striving for our blood.

"Even if they wanted to, the wise men of the Gentiles couldn't become good to the very roots of their being because they don't have a Law and because they didn't labor to perfect their qualities all their life long. Their ethics were worked out by human minds. They trusted their reasoned assumptions as men trust the ice of a frozen river in winter. Then came Hitler and put his weight on the wisdom of the wise men of the nations. The ice of their slippery reasoning burst, and all their goodness was drowned.

"And together with their goodness to others their own self-respect was drowned. Think of it! For a word they didn't like they used to fight with swords or shoot each other. To keep public opinion from sneering or a fool from calling them coward, though they trembled at the thought of dying, they went to their death. For generation after generation their arrogance grew like a cancer, until it ended by eating their flesh and sucking their marrow. For centuries they speculated, they talked, and they wrote. Does duty to nation and family come first, or does the freedom of the individual come before his obligations to parents, wife, and children—or even to one's self? They considered the matter solemnly and concluded that there are no bonds that a nation is not free to break; that truth and reason are like the sun, which must rise; can the sun be covered by throwing clods of earth at it? So there came in the West a booted ruler with a little mustache and in the East a booted ruler with a big mustache, and both of them together struck the wise man to the ground, so that he sank into the mud. I suppose you'll say that the wise men wanted to save their lives. I can understand that. But hadn't they insisted that freedom, truth, and reason are more precious to the philosopher than his life? Take that wise man whose statue is standing there, with his instruments for measuring the stars and planets. When everyone else argued: 'The sun revolves about the earth,' he said: 'Not so; do what you will to me, break me, draw and quarter me, the earth revolves around the sun!' What would he have said to his grandchildren today? If the spirit of life could return to him, he would crawl down from his niche in the wall, strike his stone head against the stone bridge and recite Lamentations."

VI

The Rasseyner had begun by speaking slowly, like the head of a Yeshiva trying to explain a difficult passage to his pupil for the hundredth time, pausing briefly every now and then so that I could follow what he was saying. Gradually his animation grew; I was reminded of the discussions we used to have at Novaredok during the evenings after the Sabbath in the weeks before the Days of Awe. He began to speak more quickly, there was

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more excitement in his voice, and he ended his sentences like a man hammering nails into a wall. He shouted at me as though I were a dark cellar and he was calling to someone hiding in me.

The square and the neighboring streets had grown quieter and the flow of people had thinned out. On the benches in the little park passers-by sat mutely, exhausted by the intense heat of the day and trying to get some relief from the cool evening breeze that had begun to blow in the blue twilight of Paris.

"Hear me out, Chaim," Hersh resumed, "I'll tell you a secret. I have to talk to you. I talked to you during all those years when I was in the ghetto and later in the camps. Don't wonder at it, because you were always dear to me, from the time you were a student in Bialystok. Even then I had the feeling that you stood with one foot outside our camp. I prayed for you. I prayed that you would remain Jewish. But my prayers didn't help. You yourself didn't want to be pious. You left us, but I never forgot you. They used to talk about you in the Yeshiva; your reputation reached us even there. And I suppose you remember the time we met in Bialystok. Later our Yeshiva was in Vilna, under the Bolsheviks, and we met again, only then you were very downhearted. In the ghetto they said you had been killed while trying to escape. Afterward we heard from partisans in the forest that you were living in Russia. I used to imagine that if we were both saved, a miracle might happen. We would meet and I could talk to you. That's why you mustn't be surprised if I talk to you as fluently as though I were reciting the daily prayers. Believe me, I have had so many imaginary debates with you that I know my arguments as well as the first prayer of the morning."

"Reb Hersh," I said, "it's getting late. The time for afternoon prayers will be over soon."

"Don't worry about my afternoon prayers, Chaim," he laughed, "I said them just after twelve o'clock. In the camp it became a habit with me not to delay carrying out any commandment. I reasoned that if any hour was to be my last, I didn't want to come to heaven naked.

"Do you have time and strength to go on listening to me? You do? Good. So far I've talked to you about the Gentile wise men. But first we ought to be clear in our own minds about our relation to them and to the whole world. And one thing more: if anything I say strikes you as being too harsh, don't take it amiss. Even though I'm talking to you, I don't mean you personally; I really mean secular Jews in general. So don't be angry.

VII

"Your Enlighteners used to sing this tune: 'Be a Jew at home and a man in public.' So you took off our traditional coat and shaved your beard and earlocks. Still, when you went out into the street, the Jew pursued you in your language, in your gestures, in every part of you. So you tried to get rid of the incubus. And the result was that the Jew left you, like an old father whose children don't treat him with respect; first he goes to the synagogue and then, because he has no choice, to the home for the aged. Now that you've seen—woe, what has happened to us!—you've turned your slogan around. Now it's be a man at home and a Jew in public. You can't be pious at home because you're lacking in faith. Out of anger against the Gentile and nostalgia for the father you abandoned, you want to parade your Jewishness in public. Only the man you try to be at home, as you call it, follows you out of your house. The parable of the Prince and the Nazirite applies to you. A dog was invited to two weddings, one near and one far. He thought: I won't be too late for the nearer one. So he ran first to the farther wedding—and missed it. Out of breath he ran to the one nearer home, and came after the feast. When he tried to push through the door, all he got was the stick. The upshot was that he missed both. The moral may be coarse, but you remember from your Novaredok days that it was applied to those who wanted to have both the pleasures of this world and the Law.

"You cried in the public square: 'The nations of the world dislike us because we're different; let us be like them!' And you were like them. Not only that, but you stood at the head of their civilization. Where there was a famous scientist, thinker, writer—there you found a Jew. And it was precisely for that reason that they hated us all the more. They won't tolerate the idea of our being like them.

During the Middle Ages the priests wanted to baptize us. They used to delight in the torments of a Jew who tried to separate himself from the Community of Israel—with his family mourning him as though he were dead and the entire congregation lamenting as though it were the fast of the Ninth of Ab. In our day, though, when they saw how easy it became for a Jew to leap over into their camp, they stationed themselves at the outposts with axes in their hands, as though to fend off wild beasts. But you were hungry and blind, so you leaped—onto their axes.

"When you ran away from being Jewish, you disguised your flight with high-sounding names. An enlightened man would talk in the

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most elevated rhetoric about Enlightenment; but what he really had in mind was to become a druggist. He yearned for the fleshpots of Egypt. His ambition was to dig his hands into the pot with no one to look him in the eye, like the miser who doesn't like anyone to be near him when he's eating. With the nations of the earth the great thing is the individual—his sovereignty, his pleasure, and his repose. But they understand that if they acted on the principle that might is right, one man would devour the other; so they have a government of individuals, and the rule is: Let me alone and I'll let you alone. With us Jews the individual doesn't exist, it's the community that counts. What's good for all must be good for each. Till your rebellion Jews lived at one—in prayer and in study, in joy and in sorrow. But you incited the tribes: 'Every man to your tents, O Israel!' Let each of us follow his own law, like the nations of the world. What's more, not only did you want to live as individuals, you wanted to die as individuals too. To avoid being confused with the other dead on the day of your death, you spent your lives erecting monuments for yourselves—one by great deeds; another by imposing his dominion; a third by a great business enterprise; and you by writing books. You didn't violate the commandment against idolatry. Of course not! You were your own gods. You prophesied: 'Man will be a god.' So naturally he becomes a devil.

"WHY are you uneasy, Reb Chaim? Didn't we agree you wouldn't be angry? I don't mean you personally; I'm only speaking figuratively. But if you really feel I mean you, then I do! The wicked are as the unquiet sea. Every wave thinks it will leap over the shore, though it sees millions of others shattered before its eyes. Every man who lives for this world alone thinks that he will succeed in doing what no one else has ever been able to do. Well, you know now how far you got! But instead of looking for solace in the Master of the World and in the Community of Israel, you're still looking for the glass splinters of your shattered dreams. And little as you'll have the world to come, you have this world even less.

"Still, not all of you secularists wanted to overthrow the yoke of the Law altogether. Some grumbled that Judaism kept on getting heavier all the time: Mishna on Bible; Gemara on Mishna; commentaries on Gemara; codes; commentaries on the codes; commentaries on the commentaries, and commentaries on them. Lighten the weight a little, they said, so what is left can be borne more easily. But the more they lightened the burden, the heavier the remainder seemed to them. I fast twice a week without difficulty, and they can hardly do it once a year. Furthermore, what the father rejected in part, the son rejected in its entirety. And the son was right! Rather nothing than so little. A half-truth is no truth at all. Every man, and particularly every young man, needs a faith that will command all of his intellect and ardor. The devout cover a boy's head with a cap when he's a year old, to accustom him to commandments; but when a worldly father suddenly asks his grown son to cover his head with a paper cap and say the blessing over the wine on a Friday evening, the young man rightly thinks the whole thing is absurd. If he doesn't believe in creation, and if the exodus from Egypt is not much of a miracle as far as he's concerned, and if the Song of Songs is to him only the song of a shepherd and a shepherdess—God forbid!—and not the song of love between the Assembly of Israel and the Holy One, blessed be He, or between the supernal soul and the Almighty, why should he bless the Sabbath wine? Anyone who thinks he can hold on to basic principles and give up what he considers secondary is like a man who chops down the trunk of a tree and expects the roots not to rot.

"I've already told you, Chaim, that we of the Mussar school are very mindful of criticism. Do you remember telling me, on a street in Bialystok, that we try to escape by withdrawal because we would rather have nothing in this world than only a little? That's true. We want a more onerous code, more commandments, more laws, more prohibitions. We know that all the pleasures of life are like salt water: the more a man drinks of it, the thirstier he becomes. That's why we want a Torah that will leave no room in us for anything else.

"SUPPOSE the Master of the World were to come to me and say: 'Hersh, you're only flesh and blood. Six hundred and thirteen commandments are too many for you, I will lighten your burden. You don't need to observe all of them. Don't be afraid, you won't be deprived of the resurrection of the dead!' Do you understand, Chaim, what it means to be at the resurrection of the dead and see life given again to all the Jews who fell before my eyes? If the Father of Mercy should ask less self-sacrifice of me, it would be very bitter for me. I would pray: 'Father of Mercy, I don't want my burden to be lightened, I want it to be made heavier.' As things are now, my burden is still too light. What point is there to the life of a fugitive, of a Jew saved from the crematorium, if he isn't always ready to

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sacrifice his bit of a rescued life for the Torah? But you, Chaim, are you as daring in your demands upon the world as I am in my demands upon the Master of the World? When you were studying with us, you were so strong and proud that you could be satisfied only by getting to the very bottom of the truth. And now do you think it right to crawl under the table of life, hoping for a bone from the feast of unclean pleasures, or a dry crumb of the joys of this world? Is that what's left to you of your pride and confidence in the warfare of life? I look at you and think: I'm still very far from what I ought to be. If I had reached a higher stage, my heart would be torn for you.

"The rebellious seducer rejected everything, while the one who halts between two opinions left something; but both of them, when they wanted to show their unfaltering good sense, first denounced the Community of Israel for allowing itself to be bound in the cobwebs of a profitless dialectic, living in a cemetery and listening to ghost stories, concerning itself with unrealities and thinking that the world ends at the ruined mill on the hilltop. The clever writer described it with great artistry and the vulgar laughed. And the secularist reformers with their enlightened little beards justified themselves with a verse: 'Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.' In other words, only because they really loved us Jews did they attack us. But they groveled before everything they saw elsewhere. They called us sycophants —but with their own souls, as with rags, they wiped the gentry's boots. The overt rebel and the man who prayed secretly and sinned secretly—why antagonize either side?—were at one in this, that the thing they mocked us for most enthusiastically was our belief in being chosen. What's so special about us? they laughed. And I say, you may not feel very special—but you have to be! You may not want it, but the Almighty does! Thousands of years ago the God of Israel said through Ezekiel His prophet: 'And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all; in that ye say: We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. As I live, saith the Lord God'—Do you hear, Chaim? The Almighty swears by His own life!—'As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I be king over you.' You're a writer; write it on your forehead. You don't seem very impressed. You don't consider a verse to be proof. But the German is a proof, isn't he? Today, because so many Jews have been cut down, you don't want to remember how you used to laugh at them. But tomorrow, when the destruction will be forgotten, you'll laugh again at the notion that God has chosen us. That's why I want to tell you something.

"You know I was in a camp. I lay on the earth and was trampled by the German in his hobnailed boots. Well, suppose that an angel of God had come to me then, that he bent down and whispered into my ear: 'Hersh, in the twinkling of an eye I will turn you into the German. I will put his coat on you and give you his murderous face; and he will be you. Say the word and the miracle will come to pass.' If the angel had asked—do you hear, Chaim?—I would not have agreed at all. Not for one minute would I have consented to be the other, the German, my torturer. I want the justice of law! I want vengeance, not robbery! But I want it as a Jew. With the Almighty's help I could stand the German's boots on my throat, but if I had had to put on his mask, his murderous face, I would have been smothered as though I had been gassed. And when the German shouted at me: 'You are a slave of slaves,' I answered through my wounded lips: 'Thou hast chosen me.'

"I want to ask you only one question, no more. What happened is known to all Jews. 'Let the whole House of Israel bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled.' All Jews mourn the third of our people that died a martyr's death. But anyone with true feeling knows that it was not a third of the House of Israel that was destroyed, but a third of himself, of his body, his soul. And so we must make a reckoning—you as well as I. Anyone who doesn't make the reckoning must be as bestial as the beasts of the wood. Let's make the reckoning together. In justice and in mercy, may we forgive the murderers? No, we may not! To the end of all generations we may not forgive them.

"Neither you nor I have the right to close our eyes at night. We have no right to flee the laments, the eyes, and the outstretched arms of the murdered; though we break under the anguish and afflictions, we have no right to flee their outcry. What then? I know that the reckoning is not yet over; far from it. And I have never thought for one moment that anyone in the world besides the jealous and vengeful God would avenge the helpless little ones that the Gestapo stuffed into the trains for Treblinka, treading on their delicate little bodies to get as many children as possible into the cars. That is why I don't have the slightest shadow of a doubt that the great and terrible day, behold it comes! When I hear people quibbling about politics, and calculating the position of the powers, I know that there is another set of books, kept in fire and blood.

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There's no use asking me whether I want it that way or not, that's the way it has to be!

"But you, Chaim, how can you eat and sleep and laugh and dress so elegantly? Don't you have to make your reckoning too? How can you thrust yourself into the world when you know it consorts with the murderers of the members of your own house? And you thought the world was becoming better! Your world has fallen! I have greater faith than ever. If I had only as much faith as in the past, that would be an offense against the martyred saints. My answer is, more and more self-sacrifice for the Master of the World; to cry out until the spirit is exhausted: 'For Thy sake are we killed all the day'; to go about, until the soul departs, with a shattered heart and hands raised to heaven: 'Father, Father, only You are left to us!' But what has changed with you, Chaim? What is your answer?"

VIII

The Rasseyner's speech was like a dry flame, progressively taking fire from itself. I realized he was unburdening himself of much accumulated anger. Finally he grew quiet. His lips were pinched with the effort he had to make to obey himself and speak no more.

The blue of the evening sky was growing darker. The stone figures around the Hôtel de Ville had shrunk, as though frightened by what the Rasseyner had said, and quietly burrowed deeper into the walls. The old building was now half in darkness. The street lamps brought out the flat green color of our surroundings. Black shining autos slid quietly over the asphalt. A thin little rain began to come down. Windows were lighting up. The people walking along on the other side of the street seemed to be moving with a silent, secret pace behind a thick silken curtain, woven of the summer rain.

From our little empty corner in the shade I looked across the street. In the light of the electric lamps the raindrops looked like millions of fireflies hastening down from the sky in hurried joy. I had an impulse to merge myself with the human stream flowing down the surrounding lighted streets. I stirred, and I felt the little pricks of pain in my stiffened limbs. The light rain came to an end. Hersh sat near me, motionless and as though deaf, his shoulders sharp and angular and his head bowed and sunk in darkness. He was waiting for me to answer.

"Reb Hersh," I finally said, "as I sat here listening to you, I sometimes thought I was listening to myself. And since it's harder to lie to yourself than to someone else, I will answer you as though you were my own conscience, with no thought either of merely being polite or of trying to win a debate. I am under no greater obligation than you to know everything. I don't consider it a special virtue not to have doubts. I must tell you that just as the greatness of the faithful consists in their innocence and wholeness, so the heroism of thinkers consists in their being able to tolerate doubt and make their peace with it. You didn't discover your truth; you received it ready-made. If anyone should ask you about something in your practice of which you yourself don't know the meaning, you answer: 'The work of my fathers is in my hands.' As a rule, a man is a rebel in his youth; in age he seeks tranquillity. You had tranquillity in your youth, while I don't have it even now; you once predicted it would be so with me. But is your tranquillity of soul a proof that the truth is with you? For all your readiness to suffer and make sacrifices, there is an element of self-satisfaction in you. You say of yourself that you were born in a coat of many colors—with the truth.

"They used to call 'the old one,' the founder of Novaredok, the master of the holes. It was said that Reb Joseph Yoyzl lived apart for many years in the woods in a hut that had two holes in the wall; through one they would hand him milk foods and through the other meat foods. When he put his withdrawal behind him and came back into the world, his philosophy was either milk or meat, one extreme or the other, but nothing in between. His disciples, including you, took this teaching from him. His disciples want what they call wholeness too, and they have no use for compromises. What you said about our wanting a small Torah so that it would be easier for us was simply idle words. On the contrary, we make it harder for ourselves, because we acknowledge a double responsibility—toward Jewish tradition and toward secular culture.

"You said that among Jews the important thing was always the community and not the individual, until we came along and spoiled it; we wanted to be like the Gentiles, for whom the I is more important than anything else. And in order to hurt me, you tried to persuade me that what I want to do is to climb up the Hôtel de Ville and put myself there as a living monument to myself. You allow yourself to mock, because after all, what you do is for the sake of Heaven, isn't that so? I won't start now to tell you historical facts about leaders and rulers who made the community their footstool. As for what you say, that the principle among Jews was always the community until we came, I agree. We secularists

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want to free the individual. You say a man should tear his individual desires out of himself. But for hundreds of years men have gone to torture and death so that the commonwealth shall consist of free and happy individuals. I could read you an all but endless list of our own boys and girls whose youth was spent in black dungeons because they would not be deterred from trying to make the world better. You yourself know about Jewish workers in our own day and in former days who fought against all oppressors and tyrants. The only thing is that you won't concede that free-thinkers can sacrifice themselves too, so you complain that they left Jewish tradition only to enjoy forbidden pleasures. That is untrue. In my own quarter I knew as many 'seekers' as in Novaredok—and more. Because you denied the world, Reb Hersh, you withdrew into an attic. But these young people dearly loved the world, and they sacrificed themselves—to better it.

"What right then do you have to complain to us about the world? You yourself said that we dreamed about another, a better world—which nullifies your accusation. We carried into the world our own vision of what the world should be, as the Jews in the wilderness carried the Ark with the tablets of the Covenant, so that they could enter the land of Canaan with their own Law. You laugh; you say that we deceived ourselves. I'll ask you: Do you renounce Judaism because the Samaritans and the Karaites distorted the Law of Moses?

"But I don't have to apologize to you. You lump me together with the murderers and demand an accounting of me for the world. I can be as harsh an accuser as you. I can cry out against you and demand an accounting of you. If we have abandoned Jewish tradition, it's your fault! You barricaded yourself, shut the gates, and let no one out into the open. If anyone put his head out, you tried to pull him back by his feet; and if you couldn't, you threw him out bodily and shut the doors behind him with a curse. Because he had no place to go back to he had to go farther away than he himself would have wished. From generation to generation you become more fanatical. Your hearts are cold and your ears deaf to all the sciences of the world. You laugh at them and say they are futile things. If you could, you would put people in the pillory again, as the Gaon of Vilna did to a follower of the Enlightenment who dared say that the old exegetes did not know Hebrew grammar too well. Even today, for the smallest transgression you would impose the gravest punishment, if you could. But because you can't, you shorten your memories. You pretend not to remember how you used to persecute anyone who was bold enough to say anything different from you without basing himself on the authority of the ancient sages, of blessed memory, or even with their authority. All your life you studied *The Path of the Upright*. Do you know how much its author was suspected and persecuted, how much anguish they caused him, how they hunted for heresy in his writings? Do you know that, at least? And you yourself, didn't you examine the contents of your students' trunks, looking for forbidden books? Even now doesn't your voice have in it something of the voice of the trumpet of excommunication? Doesn't your eye burn like the black candle of excommunication? And do you really think that with all your protestations, you love Jews more than the writers for whom it was so painful to write critically of the Jewish community? Didn't you bury them outside the wall, when you could, with no stone to mark their grave? Incidentally, Reb Hersh, I want you to know that this neighborhood we're in is old Paris. Here by the Hôtel de Ville, where we're sitting, is the Place de Grève—that is, Execution Square, where they used to torture and execute those who were condemned to death. It was right here, more than seven hundred years ago, that Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* was burned, on a denunciation by eminent and zealous rabbis. Rabbi Jonah Gerondi had a hand in it. Later, when the priests began to burn the Talmud too, Rabbi Jonah felt that it was a punishment from Heaven for his warfare against Maimonides, and he repented. That was when he wrote his *Gates of Repentance*. In Novaredok they used to read the *Gates of Repentance* with such outcries that their lungs were almost torn to shreds; but they never thought to learn its moral, which is not to be fanatical.

"How estranged you feel from all secular Jews can be seen in your constant repetition of 'we' and 'you.' You laugh at us poor secularists. You say that our suffering is pointless; we don't want to be Jews, but we can't help it. It would follow that the German made a mistake in taking us for Jews. But it's you who make that mistake. The enemies of Israel know very well that we're the same; they say it openly. And we're the same not only for the enemies of Israel, but for the Master of the World as well! In the other world your soul won't be wearing a cap or a beard or sidecurls. Your soul will come there as naked as mine. You would have it that the real Community of Israel is a handful of Hersh Rasseyners. The others are quarter-Jews, tenth-Jews

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—or not even that. You say that being Jewish is indivisible, all or nothing. So you make us Jews a thousand times fewer than we already are.

"You were right when you said that it was not a third of our people that was murdered, but rather that a third was cut out of the flesh and soul of every Jew who survived. As far as you're concerned, though, Reb Hersh, was it really a third of our people that perished? The gist of what you say—again the same thing—is that anyone who isn't your kind of Jew is not a Jew at all. Doesn't that mean that there were more bodies burned than Jews who were murdered? You see to what cruelty your religious fanaticism must lead.

"I WANT you to consider this and settle it with yourself. Those Jews who didn't worry night and day about the high destiny of man, who weren't among the thirty-six hidden righteous men who sustain the world, but who lived a life of poverty for themselves, their wives, and their children; those Jews who got up in the morning without saying the proper morning prayers and ate their black bread without saying the blessing over bread; those Jews who labored on the Sabbath and didn't observe the last detail of the Law on Holy Days; those Jews who waited submissively and patiently at the table of this world for a crumb to fall their way (that's what you, Reb Hersh, the hermit of Novaredok, the man who lives apart, taunted them with), those Jews who lived together in neighborliness, in small quarrels and small reconciliations, and perished together in the same way—do you admit them to your paradise or not? And where will they sit? At the east wall, together with the Mussarists, or at the door, with their feet outside? You will tell me that the simple man is saintly and pure, because he perished as a Jew. But if he survived, is he wicked and evil, because he doesn't follow in your way? Is that your mercy and love for the Community of Israel? And you dare to speak in their name and say you're the spokesman of the sainted dead! Why are you getting up? Do you want to run away? But you assured me you used to dream of meeting me and talking it out with me. Can you only talk and not listen? Novaredok Mussarist, sit down and hear me out!

"If secular Jews are so alien to you, why should I be surprised at the blackness of your hatred against the whole non-Jewish world? But let's not quarrel any more, Reb Hersh; let's reckon our accounts quietly. May we hate the whole non-Jewish world? You know as well as I do that there were some who saved the lives of Jews. I won't enter into a discussion with you about the exact number of such people. It's enough for me that you know there were some.

"In 1946, in Poland, I once attended a small gathering in honor of a Pole, a Christian who had hidden ten Jews. At that little party we all sat around a table. We didn't praise the doctor, we didn't talk about noble and exalted things, about humanity and heroism, or even about Jews and Poles. We simply asked him how it was that he wasn't afraid to hide ten Jews behind the wall of his office. The doctor was a small, gray-haired man. He kept on smiling, almost childishly, and he thanked us in embarrassment for the honor—a great honor!—that we were doing him. He answered our question in a low voice, almost tongue-tied: when he hid the Jews he felt sure that since it was a good deed, nothing bad would happen to him.

"Here in Paris there's an old lady, a Lithuanian. I know her well. Everybody knows that in the Vilna ghetto she saved the lives of Jews, and also hid books. The Germans sentenced her to death, but she was spared by a miracle. They sent her to a camp in France. Since she was liberated she has been associating with Jewish refugees. She's an old revolutionist, an atheist; that is to say, she doesn't believe in God.

"Imagine that both of them, the old lady and the old man, the Lithuanian and the Pole, the revolutionist and the Christian, were sitting here listening to us! They don't say anything, they only listen. They are frightened by your accusations, but not angry, because they understand that your hatred grows out of sorrow. Neither do they regret having saved the lives of Jews; they only feel an ache in their hearts, a great pain. Why do you think they saved the lives of Jews? The devout Christian didn't try to convert anyone. The old revolutionist didn't try to make anyone an atheist; on the contrary, she hid our sacred books. They saved the lives of Jews not from pity alone, but for their own sakes as well. They wanted to prove to themselves—no one else could possibly have known—that the whole world does not consist only of criminals and those who are indifferent to the misfortune of others. They wanted to save their own faith in human beings, together with the lives of Jews. Now you come along and repudiate everything in the world that isn't piously Jewish. I ask you: is there room in your world for these two old people? Don't you see that you would drive them out into the night? Will you take them, the righteous of the nations of the world, out

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of the category of Gentile and put them in a special category? They didn't risk their lives so that Reb Hersh Rasseyner, who hates everyone, everyone, could make an exception of them.

"But you ask me what has changed for me since the destruction. And what has changed for you, Reb Hersh? You answer that your faith has been strengthened. I tell you openly that your answer is a paltry, whining answer. I don't accept it at all. You must ask God the old question about the righteous man who fares ill and the evil man who fares well —only multiplied for a million murdered children. The fact that you know in advance that there will be no explanation from Heaven doesn't relieve you of the responsibility of asking, Reb Hersh! If your faith is as strong as Job's, then you must have his courage to cry out to Heaven: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; but I will argue my ways before Him!' If a man hasn't sinned, he isn't allowed to declare himself guilty. As for us, even if we were devils, we couldn't have sinned enough for our just punishment to be a million murdered children. That's why your answer that your faith has been strengthened is no answer at all, as long as you don't demand an accounting of Heaven.

"Reb Hersh, we're both tired and burned out from a whole day of arguing. You ask what has changed for me. The change is that I want to make peace with you, because I love you deeply. I never hated you and I never searched for flaws in your character, but what I did see I didn't leave unsaid. When you became angry with me before I left, I became angry with you, but now I'm filled with love for you. I say to you as the Almighty said to the Jews assembled in Jerusalem on the feast days: I want to be with you one day more, it is hard for me to part from you. That's what has changed for me and for all Jewish writers. Our love for Jews has become deeper and more sensitive. I don't renounce the world, but in all honesty I must tell you we want to incorporate into ourselves the hidden inheritance of our people's strengths, so that we can continue to live. I plead with you, do not deny us a share in the inheritance. However loudly we call out to Heaven and demand an accounting, our outcry conceals a quiet prayer for the Divine Presence, or for the countenance of those destroyed in the flames, to rest on the alienated Jews. The Jewish countenance of the burned still hangs in clouds of gas in the void. And our cry of impotent anger against Heaven has a deeper meaning as well: because we absolutely refuse our assent to the infamous and enormous evil that has been visited on us, because we categorically deny its justice, no slavish or perverse acquiescence can take root in our hearts, no despairing belief that the world has no sense or meaning.

"Reb Hersh, we have been friends since the old days in the Yeshiva. I remember that I once lost the little velvet bag in which I kept my phylacteries. You didn't eat breakfast and you spent half a day looking for it, but you couldn't find it. I got another bag to hold my phylacteries, but you're still looking for the old one.

"Remember, Reb Hersh, that the texts inscribed in my phylacteries are about the Community of Israel. Don't think that it's easy for us Jewish writers. It's hard, very hard. The same misfortune befell us all, but you have a ready answer, while we have not silenced all our doubts, and perhaps we never will be able to silence them. The only joy that's left to us is the joy of creation, and in all the travail of creation we try to draw near to our people.

"Reb Hersh, it's late, let us take leave of each other. Our paths are different, spiritually and practically. We are the remnant of those who were driven out. The wind that uprooted us is dispersing us to all the corners of the earth. Who knows whether we shall ever meet again? May we both have the merit of meeting again in the future and seeing how it is with us. And may I then be as Jewish as I am now. Reb Hersh, let us embrace each other. . . ."

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VERGIL, HEBREW PROPHECY, AND THE ROMAN IDEAL

Aeneas as the Roman Moses

MOSES HADAS

THE influence of the *Aeneid* in shaping European ideas on religion and politics has been incalculably great, and it is the peculiarly Vergilian content of the poem, not the things borrowed from Greek models, that exercised this influence. Because strict adherence to Greek models is for Vergil, as for other Roman poets, the first law of literary composition, his own central convictions are easy to discover; they lie in his deviations from the canons of the Homeric poems.

The *Aeneid* celebrates an institution, not, as in Homer, a person; an elect and dutiful people, not a self-willed hero. It preaches Roman obedience to a divinely ordained mission, and holds out a hope that the bearers of that mission will, under Providence, bring blessings to all mankind. It is pensive to the point of melancholy, it operates with half-lights, symbols, and evocations. In all these respects, the *Aeneid's* differences from Homer and other Greek models can be readily documented, both in countless details and in the edifice as a whole. But two of these deviations, one having to do with structure and the other with motivation, are particularly worth examining. The structural device is the use of the apocalyptic—the drama of revelation in a situation of crisis—and the motivation is involved in a new concept of the hero.

THE action of the *Aeneid* is set in the period of the Trojan War, which was commonly (and probably correctly) dated to the 12th century B.C.E., and prophecies from that vantage point which the reader knows to have been fulfilled create credit for other prophecies which refer to what is still the actual future for both reader and writer. The reader is regularly astonished, for example, at Dido's clairvoyance in the matter of the wars between Rome and Carthage (though his books tell him that they were fought centuries before Vergil wrote), and thus becomes ready to believe (so the poet hopes) that Vergil's other prophecies, of universal peace under the beneficent and divinely ordained hegemony of Rome, will be equally true. Now this technique, common in the *Aeneid* but approximated in classical literature only in Lycophron's *Alexandra,* and there only indifferently, is precisely the technique of the Biblical apocalypses. Daniel is a character of the Babylonian Exile, but scholars can date the composition of the Book of Daniel to a specific month during the Maccabean uprising, at the point where "prophecy" left history—and proved wrong.

MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY claimed Vergil for its own, and Dante had the Roman poet accompany him to the very gates of Heaven on his journey through the other world. But we learn from MOSES HADAS that, though the Jews have never thought of claiming Vergil, he was in fact greatly influenced by Hebrew conceptions. Indeed, it may well be that in fathering the Roman ideal—which is commonly contrasted with the Jewish ideal—Vergil was chiefly inspired by Biblical legend. Dr. Hadas, famous classical scholar and professor of Greek and Latin at Columbia University, was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1900. He has published scholarly editions of Maccabees III and Maccabees IV, and written histories of Greek and Latin literature, besides translating much from those literatures themselves. Among the books which he has recently edited (and, in part, translated) are *The Basic Works of Cicero* and *The Greek Poets*, an anthology, both under the Modern Library's imprint. His most recent work of translation is *Three Greek Romances,* which has just been published by Anchor Books.

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Enoch, who is the hero of a whole group of apocalypses going back to the 2nd century B.C.E., is a better example than Daniel, for "Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). Not having died, he could receive and transmit special revelations. Homer had not reported the death of Aeneas, so he, too, could be considered to have departed this earth without perishing; and like Enoch, he was the protégé of a powerful divinity. Thus, not only did Vergil exploit the technique of the apocalypse as a literary effect; he also used it for essentially religious ends, as did the writers of the Biblical apocalypses.

More obvious to the practiced reader of Greek and Latin literature than this technique is the new conception of the hero. Achilles, Odysseus, and Jason (in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*) are mainly concerned with, and admirable for, their individual prowess; in any but the Homeric conception, for a great soldier to sulk in his tent when his services are desperately needed would be treasonable. When a Homeric hero is confronted by a dangerous enemy and has spent spear and sword, he lifts a boulder to hurl that two—but only two—men of the present generation are barely able to lift; of the boulder Aeneas hurled Vergil can say that twelve men alive at the time he wrote could lift it—because he is not concerned to depict an ordinary hero. If an ordinary man had deserted Dido he would have been (in Vergil's eyes if not in Homer's) a cad. When Aeneas does so he is called *pius*, because he has suppressed a personal inclination in order to carry out the mission to which he has been divinely called and of which he constantly receives supernatural reminders.

Aeneas dominates his poem to a far greater degree than the Greek heroes do theirs, not, however, as a traditional epic hero, but as a disciplined and institutionalized instrument of destiny. As such he acquires the aspect of a symbol, which tends to separate him from ordinary humanity. Through Silvius he is the ancestor of the Alban kings and of Romulus; through Iulus, of the Julian *gens* and the house of Augustus. Not only as the founder of these two great lines, but as the parent of the Roman people (who are significantly called "children of Aeneas"), Aeneas must have within him all the virtues which his descendants inherit.

In a word, the *Aeneid* possesses the character of a sacred book which its rivals in epic do not. The story demands attention not only as literature but as patriotism raised to a religion. Nowhere in previous classical literature is secular history so clearly regarded as the working out of a divine plan; for a true parallel to Aeneas as a canonized national hero we must go beyond the bounds of that literature.

IT IS in the East, and among the descendants of proud peoples whom Alexander's conquests had reduced to helotry, that such a concept of the national hero as we are here concerned with arose. As a result of these conquests culture reached an unparalleled degree of external uniformity all over the Hellenistic world, but pride in disparate national traditions persisted, and among peoples whose political independence had been suppressed there was felt a need, bound up with motives of religion, to assert the antiquity and dignity of individual national traditions against competing traditions, chief of which was the Greek. The need was met by fictionalized treatment of such remote figures as the Assyrian Semiramis, the Egyptian Sesostris, the Phrygian Manes, the Babylonian Ninus. Though these works have almost wholly perished, their character as nationalist propaganda is clear, and they have demonstrably influenced Greek romances whose texts are extant. In the earlier works individual heroes, apparently one for each people, out of a remote past (the figures named were all ancient to Herodotus) were glorified in fanciful tales with numerous accretions of the miraculous, and these tales became a focus for cultural survival and lent their readers a pride in their past which helped them bear the rebuffs of the present.

Of all the literary efforts calculated to insure the cultural survival of depressed national minorities in the Hellenistic world,

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we have the most extensive remains and are best informed concerning those produced by the Jews, and especially by the Jewish community of Alexandria. From the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus onward this group devoted itself to producing a body of apologetic literature (of which the Septuagint itself may fairly be regarded as a specimen) calculated to demonstrate the antiquity and high merits of Jewish tradition. Most of this writing was in the category of "history," with a preponderant interest, significantly, in the career of Moses. In certain frankly belletristic works also, such as the epic of the Elder Philo and the tragedy on the Exodus of Ezekielos, the figure of Moses seems to have loomed very large.

Of the series of legendary heroes celebrated by the descendants of the non-Hellenic peoples of the Near East it is Moses who is most likely to have become known to Vergil, and certainly Moses who provides the clearest pattern for Aeneas. Under divine instruction each leads a chosen people from bondage or defeat, and disciplines them by an arduous journey in the course of which their peoples' destiny and the kind of conduct necessary to achieve that destiny are repeatedly communicated to the leaders by supernatural agency. Their mission would not only restore the dignity of their own peoples but bring blessings to all mankind. The promised land which was to be the basis for this mission would have to be recovered from the tribes which occupied it, but in each case, in addition to divine direction, the elect had a prior claim: Dardanus had originally founded Troy from Italy, and Abraham had purchased the cave of the Machpelah from the children of Heth for four hundred pieces of silver. Greek and Roman tradition can show no such divinely guided national leader and lawgiver. Its closest approach to Moses is Lycurgus, who was said to have established the polity of Sparta according to instructions he received at Delphi; but in the opening sentences of his *Life of Lycurgus* the usually devout Plutarch is careful to cast doubt on the very existence of his hero. Alexander the Great was endowed with something of the stature of a divine leader—by the peoples he conquered, however, not by Greeks; Plutarch and other Greek writers purposely show him as all too human.

Considered separately, the *Aeneid's* parallels with Moses and the apocalypses might be thought accidental, and products of Vergil's originality. Taken together, however, they would seem to argue very strongly that Vergil was deeply influenced by Jewish tradition. The strength of the argument is further increased by a consideration of the *Fourth* or so-called "Messianic" *Eclogue,* written in 40 B.C.E., which can be seen in effect as a first draft of the *Aeneid.* In it the poet prophesies the imminent birth of a boy whose rule will usher in a golden age of peace:

> All lingering traces of our guilt shall be erased and the earth released from its continual dread. He shall have the gift of divine life. . . . The earth untilled shall pour forth her gifts. . . . Uncalled the goats shall bring home their udders swollen with milk, and the herds shall not fear huge lions; unasked thy cradle shall pour forth flowers for thy delight. The serpent too shall perish. . . .

This poem has been more widely discussed than any other piece of similar length in classical literature. From Constantine and Augustine until the age of modern criticism, Christian writers have interpreted the *Eclogue* as a prophecy of the birth of Jesus. Modern scholars have shown that the reference must be to a Roman child, and for the source of the notion of a redeemer, which the passage plainly implies, they have ransacked all the obscure cults of pagan antiquity. Yet the obvious original is the Book of Isaiah, and there is no reason to exclude the possibility that Vergil may have known of it or at least of the Messianic speculations that derived from it. The coast of Campania, where he sojourned, had a decidedly Palestinian atmosphere and many Jews were known to live there in Vergil's time. Petronius could presume that his readers would recognize the locutions of the Syrians and

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Hebrews in that region, and Vergil's friend Horace (who is himself thought by some scholars to have had Jewish blood) assumes a smattering knowledge of Jewish beliefs on the part of his readers. Certainly enough of the complex of Jewish ideas, especially in their more striking forms, was in the air to make it probable that a man alert to such notions, as Vergil clearly was, could learn from them.

It is these ideas that give the *Aeneid* its seriousness, its strength, and its seminal influence. In certain important areas of thought where religion merges with politics, Vergil has been a more direct and effective and less distorting intermediary between Judaea and Europe than Christianity itself.

BELIEF in the supernatural sanction of a specific national group and in the supernatural authority of its founder, and concomitant convictions of national election as the special instrument of providence and of responsibility to a divinely ordained mission, form a complex of ideas so familiar that we are apt to forget that they are not a natural development of native European institutions. They are altogether alien to classical Greek theory and practice, and when they appear in the Greek world it is as the deliberate inventions of philosophers and statesmen. In the 3rd century B.C.E., the Stoic Zeno, who was of Semitic origin, dreamt of a world which should no longer be composed of separate states, but be one great city under one divine law, where all were citizens and members one of another, bound together by their own consent. Like the Cynics before them, the Stoics insisted on human equality, but where the Cynics tended to withdraw from active participation in the state, the Stoics realized that their ideal of brotherhood could be attained only through the national state and not by its denial.

It was in response to a specific political situation—the principate of Augustus—that the Stoic ideal was adapted to Roman uses. For the first time—and after a period of intense crisis and bloody conflict, internal and external—the Mediterranean world was united, by the bonds of the Augustan Peace. It seemed that a perfect basis was provided for the realization of the Stoic ideal, and that ideal, in turn, seemed to provide a basis for the constitution of a world government. The men who devised the rationale for the new Roman state and for Augustus' position in it worked from the premises of Stoic theory. Like others who have exploited an attractive doctrine of universal dimensions for nationalist interests, the Romans distorted it to serve the special ambitions of Rome and Augustus. That may be why the ideal was eventually fragmented and a dozen lesser nationalities claimed to succeed to Rome's hegemony. But for contemporaries who despaired at the chaos and cruelty of the Civil Wars of the 1st century B.C.E., the new dispensation seemed to herald a golden age.

Surely a sensitive spirit like Vergil, depressed by a century of incessant war and by the knowledge that Rome was ruining peoples more cultured than herself, would grasp at the new promise like a drowning man at a straw. Past bloodshed and cruelty were justified if they resulted in a universal peace in which life would be orderly and the cultural attainments of the past could be preserved and spread abroad to the dark corners of the earth. The climactic scene in the *Aeneid* is that in the underworld, where Anchises solemnly sets forth the program of Rome:

> Others, I doubt not, shall beat out the breathing bronze with softer lines; shall from marble draw forth the features of life; shall plead their causes better; with the rod shall trace the paths of heaven and tell the rising of the stars: remember thou, O Roman, to rule the nations with thy sway—these shall be thine arts—to crown Peace with Law, to spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud.

The all too practical implication of the Augustan program was the work of politicians, but, as far as we can see, it was Vergil who emphasized the religious aspects of the Roman mission as the working out of a divine plan, and the supernatural associations of Aeneas (who is the prototype of Augustus) as the agent of that plan. And it was

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from Rome that Europe inherited the idea of supernatural sponsorship of national destiny.

WHETHER or not Vergil was the first Roman to mention this new dispensation, he was certainly its most revered and most effective spokesman, both in his own and in succeeding centuries. No poet in history has enjoyed such prestige and authority; his domination over later poets and his reputation were as great as Shakespeare's, his influence on *Weltanschauung* greater. As long as Latin was widely read, Vergil was simply "the Poet," and all literate people had him by heart. Later writers courted immortality by open adaptations of Vergil, and respectable poets like Ausonius were content to compose *centi* of Vergilian lines. In the Renaissance the highly influential *Poetics* of Jerome Vida is even more adulatory than the ancient critics.

But for the Middle Ages Vergil was more than merely the Poet: he was raised virtually to sainthood, his tomb was an object of pilgrimage, and "Vergilian lots" (found by opening the pages of his poetry at random) were consulted as authoritative guides to conduct. Medieval Christianity was discriminating in the pagan authors it chose to propagate. It is no accident that a voluptuary like Catullus or a partisan of the old order like Tacitus have survived in but single manuscripts, whereas Vergil was read continuously in many manuscripts, and had no need to be rediscovered in the Renaissance.

No other pagan could more appropriately have guided Dante through the Inferno and have set his feet on the path of apocalyptic revelation, for Vergil, too, projects an apocalypse, he too is drenched in *lacrimae rerum*, he too holds out a hope for something like salvation. But Dante learned something more than gentleness and hope from Vergil. In the "Judecca," the iciest part of Inferno, the only companions of the arch-traitor Judas Iscariot are Brutus and Cassius, who opposed Caesarism and assassinated Caesar. Their treason is equated with Judas' because Dante accepted Vergil's view of the Caesars as the divinely ordained rulers of mankind. Dante's influential treatise *On Monarchy* is in effect Vergil's political ideal made explicit. The views other than religious which Dante promulgates, therefore—or more accurately, the endowing of political views with religious sanctions that he practices—are in effect propagation of the doctrine which Vergil learned from his Jewish sources.

Obviously the principal intermediary between Judaism and European culture has been Christianity. It incorporated a large part of Judaism; and by recognizing and giving currency to the Old Testament it enabled it to serve independently as a continuing source of Jewish influence. But it was chiefly the specifically religious values of Judaism which Christianity absorbed and propagated. When Europeans concerned to justify the divine right of kings turned, as they sometimes did, directly to stories of the house of David and of the Maccabees in the Bible and Apocrypha, their citations are in the nature of learned footnotes. The texture of ordinary political thought was the legacy of the Roman ideal as formulated in the early Empire. In Vergil's hands that ideal had taken on an outward form suggested by Jewish sources, and he himself was a principal agent for communicating it to posterity. Without prejudice to Vergil's fidelity to his sources or to the good or evil implicit in his doctrine or its possible applications, it may be said in a real sense that he has been an apostle of Judaism to the nations of Europe, and introduced the immortal values of Moses and the prophets into the political life of the Western world.

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CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM FACES THE NEED OF CHANGE

In What Direction, How Much, and How?

FRITZ A. ROTHSCHILD

"HAS the synagogue become the graveyard where prayer is buried? Are we, the spiritual leaders of American Jewry, members of a *chevra kadisha* [burial society]?"

Two hundred Conservative rabbis, assembled in an Atlantic City hotel for their fifty-third annual convention, dedicated to the discussion of the "revitalization of worship in our time," were somewhat taken aback by these sharp and impassioned words of Professor Abraham J. Heschel of the Jewish Theological Seminary, who addressed them during the opening session.

"There are many who labor in the vineyard of oratory," Professor Heschel went on, "but who knows how to pray, how to inspire others to pray?

"There are many who can execute and display magnificent fireworks; but who knows how to kindle a spark in the darkness of the soul? . . . Ours is a great responsibility. We demand that people come to the synagogue instead of playing golf, or making money, or going on a picnic. Why? Don't we mislead them? People take their precious time off to attend services. Some even arrive with profound expectations. But what do they get? . . . Sometimes even the rabbi sits in his chair wondering: 'Why did all these people flock together?'"

MOST of the rabbinical audience had probably expected a report on the deterioration of worship on the part of the congregation in our time and some helpful hints on how to improve the situation. True, Dr. Heschel dealt with this, but it appeared to many that the chief target of the address was not the indifferent layman who had forgotten the ancient art of prayer, but the rabbi who has failed to make prayer a moving force in contemporary Judaism.

Although our modern services are conducted with precision, decorum, ceremony, and elegance, Dr. Heschel told his audience, the main thing is missing: *life*. The element of spontaneity and surprise is absent; everybody knows exactly what is coming. It is true that people still attend services, but for most of them this is no longer an "outpouring of the soul," but rather an act of charity: "The Jews give their money to the UJA, and some of their time to the synagogue." Various devices to remedy the situation have been suggested: greater organizational efficiency, organ music to supply the proper "mood," revision of the traditional prayerbook, distinguished guest speakers, inducing members to pledge regular at-

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"CONSERVATIVE Judaism" is the religious movement whose ideological center is the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, whose congregations form the United Synagogue, and whose rabbis are members of the Rabbinical Assembly of America. It has insisted—in contrast with Reform—that continuing Judaism in America requires no drastic adaptation of tradition; and it has tried to include within its ranks both the "Orthodox-minded" and the modernist. As a movement, it has never been stronger than today; but, perhaps for that very reason, never has the pattern it has developed for balancing tradition and change in Judaism been more under challenge, both from within and without. This year FRITZ A. ROTHSCHILD attended the annual meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly; he here reports on the addresses and debates of the meeting, as they bear on the current stocktaking and re-evaluation of Conservative tenet and practice. Mr. Rothschild was born in Germany in 1919, emigrated to Rhodesia in 1939, and came to this country in 1948. He holds a degree from the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is a fellow of its Institute for Theology, and a graduate student at Columbia University.

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tendance, reminding them of their birthdays. But all such attempts must fail. We cannot inspire souls to enter an hour of spiritual concentration in the presence of God by using applied psychology.

Professor Heschel described four doctrines on the nature and functions of prayer which have gained wide currency and have influenced modern practice:

(1) The doctrine of agnosticism, which claims that prayer is based on an illusion and grounded in superstition.

(2) "Religious behaviorism," which seems to hold that action is the essential mode of worship, that performing the correct motions will induce piety, and that Judaism is a sort of sacred physics.

(3) The doctrine which defines prayer as "the identification of the worshipper with the people of Israel," and in which it becomes something of a political act.

(4) The doctrine of "religious solipsism," which maintains that one's own individual self constitutes the whole sphere of prayer life. This doctrine is the corollary of those views in which God is assumed to be an Idea, a Power, a Spring, a Process. Since one cannot address a fountain of values, prayer is directed at "the good within ourselves."

AGAINST these doctrines Dr. Heschel tried to define the attitude of authentic Jewish tradition. Its most important principle was formulated by Rabbi Eliezer: *"Know before Whom you stand!"* The real issue of prayer is the issue of *God*. The rabbi is thus faced with a problem in intellectual honesty: in urging people to come to the synagogue he urges them to have an attitude of faith. Can he do so unless he cultivates that attitude in his own person? As Professor Heschel said: "Unless God is at least as real as my own self . . . how could I pray? If Torah is nothing but the national literature of the Jewish people, if the mystery of revelation is discarded as superstition, then prayer is an illusion. If God does not have power to speak to us, how could we possess the power to speak to Him? If the presence of God is a myth, then prayer to God is a mockery. If God is unable to listen to us, then we are insane in talking to Him."

Prayer is not an act of emotion but rather a way of understanding; it is to religion what thinking is to philosophy. The philosophy of Judaism is one of worship; a *mitzvah* is a prayer in the form of a deed. The difference between *Wissenschaft des Judentums,* (the scientific study of Judaism) and Torah consists essentially in this: if an idea we have clarified, a conception we have evolved, can be turned into a prayer it is Torah; otherwise it is *Wissenschaft.*

Professor Heschel's insistence on personal faith inevitably led him to the important problem of the twofold nature of prayer which is expressed by the Hebrew terms *keva* (fixed) and *kavvanah* (inner intention). The fixed pattern and regularity of our services, set against the demand that prayer be the spontaneous, sudden outpouring of the individual soul, creates the dialectic of prayer, a dialectic which characterizes not only the realm of worship but all Jewish life. *Halachah* and *Agadah,* law and freedom, pattern and poetry, stand to each other in a reciprocal relation which is never easy to maintain, but must always be striven for. The text of the prayers—the *keva*—belongs to all Jews and ages; *kavvanah* is the private concern of the individual and the creation of a single moment.

In our time, Jews have claimed that the traditional text of the Siddur (prayerbook) does not express the needs and aspirations of modern man, and requires revision. But in order to understand the Siddur, Professor Heschel said, it is not enough to translate the Hebrew vocables into English. We must learn to study the inner life, the soul, of the words. We have forgotten that words are commitments, not merely subject matter for aesthetic reflection. We say words, but we make no decisions.

"Preach in order to pray," Professor Heschel urged. "We must at each service learn how to convey to others what it means to say a word in the presence of God. The test of a true sermon is that it can be converted to prayer."

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A DAY later, the second speaker on prayer, Dr. Eugene Kohn, managing editor of the *Reconstructionist,* stressed quite a different approach to the problem.

Dr. Kohn asserted that there were two major reasons which prevent many from praying: the refusal of modern man to believe that prayer can change the casually determined course of natural events, and the inability to address the Deity after having rejected the idea that God is a transcendent person. In an earlier stage of cultural development men were so fascinated by the power of words to evoke a response that in their relative ignorance of natural processes they sought to control objects by the spell of words and rituals. We have rejected such ideas, and therefore we are unable to pray.

But the rejection of the primitive idea of propitiation and persuasion should not, Dr. Kohn said, lead to a rejection of legitimate prayer, which is an "effort to bring our personal lives into harmony with the Universal Life. [Prayer] should help to draw upon natural powers that are at our disposal for the achievement of personal and social salvation. . . . Since prayer is the articulation of religious ideas in language, we do not have to believe in the magical effects of words . . . in order to believe in the potency of prayer."

In short, Dr. Kohn seemed to represent the position Professor Heschel had labeled "religious solipsism," in which prayer becomes a kind of monologue, addressed to one's own self. But Dr. Kohn was careful to distinguish between the *self* as the source of selfishness and the *soul,* "the transcendent aspect of human nature which is likewise the immanent aspect of the Divine Nature." It is not important whether we address God in the second person or think of Him in the third person. "Inasmuch as we want to experience God personally, to have our relation to God influence our personal life, it is helpful to personify God and address Him *as though* we were speaking to a person. If we overstress the immanence of God to the neglect of His transcendence, we are in danger of identifying our own ego with God. But our whole purpose in prayer must be to break through our ego-centricity and put our powers of body and mind at the disposal of God as the Cosmic Process that is evolving the humanity of the future."

WHEN the floor was thrown open for discussion, one hoped for a direct confrontation of the two positions, for it had been somewhat bewildering to hear Dr. Kohn develop at length a position which Dr. Heschel had just denounced, without making any reference to the previous speaker. This hope was not to be fulfilled.

Most of the discussion centered on Dr. Heschel's sharp criticism of rabbis as responsible for the sad state of synagogue worship. One speaker said it was manifestly unjust to blame the rabbi, since many worshippers come to services not to pray but to be entertained by a "Jewish Bing Crosby." Others seemed to feel that topical sermons and greater efficiency and decorum in the synagogue were essential elements in the revival of prayer and ought not to be disparaged.

But there were even more rabbis who spoke in self-criticism and admitted that much of their work had to be considered a failure. Jacob Rosenberg of Philadelphia reminded his colleagues that only a few years ago two of the most successful rabbis of our generation, the late Milton Steinberg and the late Solomon Goldman, had stood before the convention and admitted that their ministries had been a failure, because the multitudes who thronged into their temples were coming to hear Steinberg or Goldman and not the Torah and the words of prayer. Irving Lehrman of Miami Beach pointed to the paradox that the American Jew is not an atheist, and has a positive belief in God, yet hardly feels the need to call upon Him. And still the need is there. Rabbi Lehrman told of a group of fifteen boys and girls from the University of Florida in Gainesville who drove for eight hours to arrive at his synagogue doors just as "Kol Nidre" was being sung. "When I asked them

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why they had decided to come such a great distance so unexpectedly they said that only that morning at breakfast something had moved them and they had felt they must be in a synagogue for Yom Kippur."

IT WAS late when Professor Heschel rose to speak again. He made it clear that the crisis in prayer was by no means confined to Conservative synagogues, but was a universal problem that threatened Orthodoxy as much as any other part of American Jewry. It also cannot and should not be blamed on the rabbis only: it is a symptom of a larger spiritual crisis. He had singled out the rabbis, nevertheless, because only they could turn the tide of indifference and revitalize prayer. He had not disparaged external improvements in the synagogue service, but it would be unrealistic to expect them to be a substitute for the inwardness without which all other efforts are bound to be abortive.

Visibly moved, Dr. Heschel ended his charge to the assembled rabbis: "I spoke in sincerity, in wholeheartedness out of my deep respect and affection for the members of the Rabbinical Assembly. I spoke in the spirit of self-criticism. . . . I have been deeply bothered all my life by my own failure in obtaining *kavvanah* when I pray myself. I have a great many difficulties, doubts. I do not oversimplify the religious situation. But let us stop avoiding the issue by overrating the periphery: prayer is not the main issue. The issue of prayer is God. And the problem is not synagogue attendance—it is spiritual attendance. It is not how to fill buildings, how to attract bodies to enter a space of a temple, but how to inspire souls to enter an hour of spiritual concentration in the presence of God."

II

DR. HESCHEL'S contention that the issue is not prayer, but God, may be true in more than one sense: the difference between his views and those of Dr. Kohn was certainly based on their divergent positions on the concept of God.

To Reconstructionism religion is that part of a civilization which "evaluates the experiences of the group and establishes the hierarchy of values which represent the group ideal of itself." God is the "correlative of man's will to live in its most generalized form," a projection of man's faith that the nature of the universe is such as to guarantee, or at least make possible, the attainment of human ideals. (The quotations are from Mordecai Kaplan's *The Future of the American Jew*.)

For Heschel, on the other hand, religion is based on man's most pervasive trait, radical amazement and the awareness of the ineffable. God is not the object of our thought, but the Subject whose object we are. He has written: "To think of God is to expose ourselves to Him. The religious man has an awareness of *being known* to God, as if he were an object, a thought in His mind." To know God means to know oneself known to God. Prayer not only serves to formulate and clarify one's own ideals (it does that too of course), but its aim is to become worthy of being known to Him.

But apart from such doctrinal disagreements, one has here two quite different attitudes towards the past. This difference is responsible not only for the divisions within Conservatism but for the major split in contemporary Judaism in general.

The Reconstructionists seem to be committed to a view of human history and civilization as a progressively developing process. Hence the old is usually suspect as obsolete, and the latest positions of science and sociology are taken as the highest flowering of human culture. Dr. Heschel seems to hold that much of the supremely important and true in life was revealed and discovered long ago, and that while experimental science and technology have advanced chronologically, other important elements of human culture and religion, such as the sense of wonder, the awareness of holiness as an objective dimension of reality, etc., have if anything, declined.

One could see this underlying difference revealed in the way the two speakers spoke

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about words. Thus, Dr. Kohn had complained that pre-scientific, primitive man had attributed miraculous power to words, and that prayer had been a form of magic to influence the happenings of nature, while Dr. Heschel complained that words have lost their power in modern life, that they have ceased to be commitments and have become empty tools. Dr. Kohn thought that much of the material in our traditional prayerbook is "nonsense"; Dr. Heschel, while admitting that difficulties existed, found that we did not trouble to discover the "inner life of the words" and hence missed their deeper meaning. While Dr. Heschel exclaimed, "The trouble with the prayerbook is that it is too great for us!" Dr. Kohn indicated that the trouble is that we have outgrown much of its content.

Opponents of Dr. Heschel have accused him of finding in the ancient documents of our tradition subtle concepts which are not there. Opponents of Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan, the founder and philosopher of Reconstructionism, have charged him with often interpreting the views of prophets and sages on too crude and primitive a level. Both however grapple with the same problem, though in different ways: The Jew who to any extent accepts the values and climate of opinion of the 20th century finds that much in his ancient heritage is incomprehensible, irrelevant, or unacceptable. Prayer—as the chairman of the forum remarked—was a solution to our forefathers. To us it has become a problem. Some Jews who live a life of self-imposed isolation may still continue the simple unquestioned piety of their ancestors. For them the problem of harmonizing past and present, modern life and ancestral heritage, does not exist. And at the other end of the scale we find those Jews who have completely broken with their Jewishness and thus in common with their super-Orthodox brethren do not have to face the difficulties inherent in achieving a living synthesis between their Jewish heritage and their own lives.

But most modern Jews, whether they be Orthodox or Reform, Zionists or secularists, experience the problems of this polarity. "I cannot fully accept the tradition," remarked Rabbi Jerome Lipnick during a workshop on prayer at the Rabbinic Convention, "but I cannot depart from it either." This young rabbi, eager to accept and live Judaism with his whole heart, had the intellectual honesty to admit that this ancient legacy could not just be taken over lock, stock, and barrel. How can we develop and change it without losing its substance and without cutting ourselves off from the main stream of Jewish life that has flowed from Sinai throughout the generations? And how can we afford to leave it unchanged if it does not seem to offer a way of thought with which we can feel in harmony, in 20th-century society?

III

THE question was first posed by 19th-century German Reform, the first great movement which tried to help the modern Jew effect a synthesis between his traditions and the demands of his new environment. Reform distinguished between what it considered transitory elements of Judaism such as its national aspects and the ceremonial laws and rituals, and the permanent core of eternal truths which it found in its ethical teachings. Reform declared that the binding authority of the Halachah—the system of laws embodied in the Bible, Talmud, and medieval codes—could no longer be recognized. Rituals and ceremonies were to be maintained if they proved edifying and in accord with the times but could not claim obedience as authoritative Halachah. While the Reform movement originated in Germany, it found its most fruitful soil and its most radical application in the newly developing Jewish community in America.

When Solomon Schechter, the father and master architect of American Conservative Judaism, arrived in this country fifty-one years ago, American Jewry consisted of a nucleus of comfortably settled Jews, mostly of German origin, who were preponderantly attached to Reform Judaism (there were, of course, some Orthodox Sephardic congregations, too), and an ever increasing mass

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of Eastern European Jews who had just come to the New World. These latter were split up into thousands of different groups, congregations, and rites, and organizational chaos reigned among them. Reform, whose services and customs had very little in common with the traditional type of Judaism the immigrants were familiar with, could hardly attract them.

Schechter, who had given up a lecturership in Rabbinics at Cambridge and a promising academic career in England in order to head the reorganized Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, set as the task of the Seminary the training of rabbis for those who were committed to traditional Judaism and yet believed that it need not be cut off from modern life. Schechter did not want to found a new sect but rather to unite all Jews who were not committed to the radical abrogation of Halachah which characterized Reform. The Seminary was to be "a theological center which would be all things to all people, reconciling all parties, and appealing to all sections of the community." In 1913 a union of congregations affiliated with the Conservative movement was established, the United Synagogue. The Conservative congregations were then—and are today—a far from homogeneous body, differing widely in many practices and views.

The Conservative Judaism which Schechter proclaimed in America was another attempt to create a viable equilibrium between the poles of change and tradition. The men who founded it were equally dissatisfied with the neo-Orthodox position which accepted the whole tradition and seemed opposed to any but the minutest changes, and the Reform point of view which they felt had cut off from Judaism almost everything that was distinctive and unique.

Conservatism, like Reform, found much of its theoretical justification in Germany. The positive-historical school headed by Zechariah Frankel admitted that Judaism had always been a growing and changing religion. But—they continued—these changes had not been made lightly; they were made within the framework of Halachah and were based on the practice of the mass of Jews who accepted the traditional system of law as their rule of behavior. Or, as Schechter wrote: "The norm as well as the sanction of Judaism is the practice actually in vogue. Its consecration is the consecration of general use—or, in other words, of Catholic Israel."

While he did not leave a clear-cut solution to the vital problems of tradition and change, Schechter established the guiding principles which still animate his successors: the "conservative" tendency, the concept of "Catholic Israel," and the positive evaluation of science and scholarship. The latter has led to a tradition of academic freedom and a devotion to Jewish research at the Seminary which has been firmly maintained by Schechter's successors.

Much has changed since Schechter began his work in the United States, and we now face a situation which is unlike that of earlier days in two important points:

First, Schechter's initial hope to unite all traditional Jews without creating a new party has not been fulfilled. Orthodoxy has become organized as a movement of its own, and the Conservative movement has been forced to become one of the parties in American Jewry.

Second, we have to reckon with the very rapid alienation of the masses of Jews from traditional observances during the last five decades which is only now showing signs of slowing up. Changes in Jewish law can no longer be based on the Talmudic precept: "Go out and see what the people are doing!" The chances are they are not doing very much. Hence the problem of finding a way of changing and developing Halachah has become perhaps the most serious problem of Conservative Judaism. The generalities about combining tradition with life, conservation with change, define the problem rather than solve it, for what is in question is: how much change, and how much tradition?

IV

On this problem, Conservatism, like American Judaism in general, is di-

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vided into three parts. There is a quasi-Orthodox right wing, a radical left wing known as Reconstructionism, and the center, which comprises the majority. One could see these differences in action when the Rabbinical Assembly met to hear a report of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards and to vote on a resolution which would create a new instrument in the age-old process of interpreting Halachah.

A committee on law had been created by the Rabbinical Assembly as early as 1916 and the objectives of this body were set forth a year later in a report by Professor Louis Ginzberg, the famous Talmudic scholar of the Seminary. He pointed out that though historical Judaism must insist on the immutability of the Torah, a conception of the Torah as a "transcendental automaton" which, once wound up, would go on forever without any human intervention, is philosophically absurd and theologically dangerous. "What constitutes Jewish law is the interpretation and application of the words of the Torah by an authoritative body."

The committees of the Conservative movement have indeed answered questions on Jewish law in conformance with tradition. But many rabbis complained that the Conservative approach was too timid, not daring to go beyond what Orthodox bodies would permit. Some rabbis suspected that behind this Conservative tendency to shy away from changes was the fear that a more creative approach would lead to such violent reaction from the Orthodox as to destroy all possibility of a "Catholic Israel." Other authorities favoring the right-wing approach in matters of Halachah seemed to think that it was pointless to liberalize the law for people who did not keep it anyhow, while those who were truly observant did not need such new enactments. Their opponents among the members of the rabbinate agreed that "lawlessness" was prevalent (even in most Orthodox congregations) but blamed this partly on the very reluctance to make any changes.

As a consequence of this dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements, the Rabbinical Assembly enlarged its Law Committee in 1948 so that it now represents all wings of the movement. It also was decided that in cases where no unanimity on a point of law could be obtained, the Committee should issue and publish both a majority and minority opinion. This enables individuals to follow the opinion of their choice and creates once more the kind of democratic expression of various standpoints which can be seen in the pages of the Talmud, where minority opinions are recorded together with those of the majority.

THE new proposal submitted to the 1953 convention dealt with one more project to create order out of the existent chaos. It was to set up a National Bet Din (Rabbinic Court) for Marriage and Domestic Relations in which a group of distinguished Talmudists would apply Halachah to pressing problems of marriage law. The rather special problem of the *agunah* (a woman whose husband has deserted her or who has disappeared), which has served opponents of traditional Halachah as a prime example of its inability to deal with modern life, was perhaps the major reason for this proposal. Since the Bible specifies that in cases of divorce the husband has to issue a bill of divorcement, a Jewish woman who is civilly divorced cannot remarry according to Jewish law if her husband has refused to issue the necessary document (*get*). In the autonomous Jewish communities of the Middle Ages and Eastern Europe the rabbis exercised enough power and influence to force a husband to issue a writ, if they felt a marriage should be dissolved. But in modern America, and elsewhere, cases have multiplied where indifferent, unscrupulous, and irreligious men have refused to issue the *get* or have extorted money from their former wives before granting it.

To deal with this problem, Professor Saul Lieberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and one of the world's most eminent Talmudists, now proposed that a clause be inserted in the Jewish marriage contract

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under which bride and groom would accept the authority of a Jewish religious court which could take legal action to force husbands to comply with Jewish divorce law. The new Bet Din would be this court; it could, in addition, deal with all questions of marriage law and would publish its responsa.* (It is revealing of the combination of old and new which is characteristic for Conservatism that the same resolution which deals with this new extension of ancient law embodies a proposal to set up, together with the Bet Din, a system of marriage-counselling and other means for the preservation of family life.)

There was lively opposition on the Convention floor to the establishment of the National Bet Din. Dr. Ira Eisenstein, president of the Rabbinical Assembly and a leader of Reconstructionism, thought that this new institution would tend to sectarianize Conservativism, since neither the Orthodox nor the Reform group would recognize it. Dr. Eisenstein pleaded in the name of Jewish unity for an indefinite postponement of the plan until such time as the other movements would participate. Other members rejoined that this would be impracticable: Orthodoxy has adamantly refused to cooperate with Conservatism on Jewish law, and Reform has dispensed with most of it anyhow. If Conservatism is concerned with Halachah as a living process it must have the courage to go ahead even if it cannot get approval from the other parties.

It is interesting that it should have been the Reconstructionists, furthest removed from Orthodoxy, who laid the greatest stress on avoiding any arrangement which would further widen the breach with Orthodoxy. Certainly this was in line with their emphasis on restoring some kind of organizational unity in American Jewry. Members of the right wing and center pointed out, however, that the Reconstructionists had, in theory at least, abandoned the Halachic approach altogether. They regarded Jewish laws as folkways and not divinely ordained ordinances, and had no need to make authoritative changes of the law since they abrogated it individually according to their own convictions and the practices of the laity. Hence it would be most unfair for Reconstructionists to prevent those committed to Jewish law from setting up the appropriate instruments for its successful functioning.

The final vote was for the establishment of the new Rabbinic Court after a six-month period during which Reform and Orthodoxy will be given an opportunity to participate in the new venture.

V

BEHIND the entire discussion one can perceive the central problem of Jewish religion in America. The practice of Jews is changing rapidly under the impact of modern life. This practice becomes ever more remote from Jewish tradition. Is there any authoritative way—that is, consistent with the development of Halachah—of creating forms that will be sufficiently close to the actual life of Jews so as to influence them, and thus play a central role in the development of American Judaism?

It is not easy to know how effective the decisions taken at Atlantic City will be in dealing with these problems. The establishment of the new Bet Din was the outcome of a special mid-winter conference in which this project was launched as a joint undertaking of the rabbinate and the Seminary faculty. There were serious difficulties and differences of opinion to begin with: some members of the rabbinate, while profoundly respectful of their former teachers and their immense scholarly erudition, felt that a more radical and realistic approach to the problem of change was needed than they expected from the scholars, who were experts in academic lore but who did not have to face the everyday problems and attitudes of the average American congregation. Yet the chancellor of the Seminary, Dr. Louis Fin-

*Many religious courts now exist which deal with such matters, but their authority only extends to those who accept it. The new National Bet Din could be given explicit authority in the marriage contract form used by the large body of Conservative rabbis.

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kelstein, did manage to obtain the cooperation of the rabbis as well as the faculty members concerned. The success of the new institution now depends on its ability to interpret and develop Jewish law both in accordance with the traditional canons to which the Seminary Talmudists are committed and the needs of the laity in 20th-century America whose spokesmen are the rabbis who head the congregations.

No one can yet say that Conservative Judaism has solved the problem to everybody's satisfaction, but at least, it can be claimed, Conservatism clearly recognizes the task and does not make light of the difficulties either by pretending that they do not exist—as extreme Orthodoxy does—or by abandoning *ab initio* the bulk of Jewish tradition, as classical Reform did. As Professor Simon Greenberg, vice chancellor of the Seminary, has said: "We wanted and want to match the most ardent Hebraist in knowledge of Hebrew, the most ardent Orthodox Jew in the practice of piety, the most ardent Reform Jew in determination to make Judaism aesthetically attractive, and the most militant secularist in making Judaism contemporaneous and relevant." And these aspirations have indeed been realized in the lives of many of the members of the movement. But this admirable tendency to encompass so wide a range of aims can also lead to the indecision and vagueness, as to what *specifically* constitutes proper and necessary change, that to some seems characteristic of Conservative Judaism.

THERE are some who discern a trend in contemporary Judaism which would ultimately lead to a division into two groups instead of three. These people point to the fact that Reform Judaism has moved away from the anti-Zionist and anti-law position of its early days, and that such a "reformed" Reform might be merged with the Reconstructionist wing of Conservatism. On the other hand, every year an increasing number of Orthodox rabbis apply for membership in the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly. Thus American Jewry might ultimately be divided into those who base their lives on the authority of Halachah, and those who take an eclectic attitude toward Jewish laws and observances.

But the majority of observers believe that the existing division of American Israel is here to stay and that the forces which unite the various trends within Conservatism are strong and enduring. Common loyalty to the Seminary together with an ardent love for all things Jewish unite center, left, and right wings. Dedication to the Hebrew language, to Zionism, and to Jewish culture, and to traditional observances such as the Sabbath, the holidays, and *kashrut,* are to be found not only among the more traditionally minded but also among the Reconstructionists, though they underpin them with a different rationale.

Meanwhile, despite the division, each movement within American Jewry indirectly influences the others. Thus the organizational efficiency of Reform has been imitated by both Orthodoxy and Conservatism. Today Conservatism has in its turn proved that Jewish traditional ritual can be made meaningful and compatible with modern life, a demonstration that has already led to a return to many observances in many Reform congregations. And if the Conservative movement can demonstrate through its Law Committee and its National Bet Din that Halachah can be developed imaginatively yet with integrity, it may be hoped that this lesson will not be lost on organized Orthodoxy.

Prayer and Law were the most important topics of the fifty-third convention of the Rabbinical Assembly in 1953. The contribution of Conservatism to Jewish life and history will depend finally on its ability to effect a synthesis of these two. If it can harmoniously weave together pattern and spontaneity, external law and inward aspiration, then it will have indeed made a contribution to the creative continuance of Judaism in America.

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THE AMERICAN NEGRO IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

Three Novelists: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin

STEVEN MARCUS

IN PICKING up a novel about Negroes one feels almost as if the writer were starting from scratch—as if he were writing about people who have been deprived of culture and of coherent history. It is interesting that although there is much good English literature about India, English writing about Africa is often quite bad. Kipling, Forster, and Orwell wrote of India accepting the fact that the Indians had a culture, even when, like Orwell, they were intent on decrying it. In Africa, on the other hand, while there may have been the Negro race, there was for the European no recognizable culture; there was life, but no intelligible *way* of life, no immediately perceptible, coherent arrangement of rituals and institutions ordering the lives of its members, only an apparent vacuum of savagery and decay. This "vacuum," to be sure, was what interested the writer, who was therefore more inclined to yield to it than to look for the cultural reality that would have contradicted it; but too often it defeated him. The weaknesses of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and even such less remarkable works as Buchan's *Prester John* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson,* derive from the inexpressibility of that violent nothingness, which is supposed to be Africa.

With the exception of Mark Twain, this attitude towards Africa was carried over into American literature about Negroes: from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Faulkner, we have a record of the identification of blackness with sub-humanity of one form or another, whether perceived with civilized horror or sentimental identification. And Negro writers have themselves been infected with this attitude.

The error is understandable. After all, the novel itself has a history: it developed with the emergence of the modern consciousness of personality. African culture, with its essential stasis, its meager history, and the narrow possibilities its rituals afford, could hold little interest for the novelist, who is concerned above all with the fate of the complex personality against a complex social background.

But American Negroes are no longer Africans, and the main problem for the serious writer dealing with them is to discover how Negro life in America operates to develop Negro personality. The two best novelists about race, Kipling and Faulkner, conceive of their job in terms of a problem in cultural miscegenation. Kim, for example, although he is white, has been raised as a Hindu, can pass for any kind of Indian, and is himself confused about who and what he is—an ambiguity which allows him to love and benefit from the two cultures which he

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NOVELS about Negro life, STEVEN MARCUS tells us, even when written by Negroes, have too often carried over the stereotype of "darkest Africa," a primitive vacuum without culture and without order. Examining here recent books by three American Negro novelists —Richard Wright's *The Outsider* (Harper), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (Random House), and James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (Knopf)—Mr. Marcus finds in at least two of these writers evidence that, in the search for identity that is so large a preoccupation with the Negro writer, there is a new and deeper understanding of his culture as it has developed in the United States. Mr. Marcus, now working towards his doctorate at Cambridge University, was born in New York City in 1928 and did his undergraduate work at Columbia University. Readers will recall his articles "Terrors of Yoknapatawpha and Fairfield" and "The Highbrow Know-Nothings," in our issues of December 1952 and February 1953 respectively.

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straddles. Faulkner, although he encumbers himself with an unsatisfactory theological history about the Civil War, and although he often dehumanizes the Negroes all over again by allowing them only negative virtues ("they endured"), can create characters like Lucas Beauchamp and Joe Christmas, products of actual miscegenation, who are convincing in the dilemma of their identity. In these characters Faulkner resembles Kipling, and comes close to making some statement about the relation between two ways of life; ultimately, however, he does not do this, because to Faulkner also the Negro way of life has no essential organization: he can attribute little to it except passive or negative qualities, and he sees it too much as an unchanging element to play off against the fluidity of white society; Negro life for Faulkner is still "African," without culture.

WITHIN the past year, three novels about Negroes by Negro writers have appeared. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* are their first novels; Richard Wright's *The Outsider* is his second. All three are primarily concerned with the city Negro in the North, and all employ devices which are remarkably similar. Like Kipling and Faulkner they treat their subject as a problem in personal identity. And although it would be foolish to suppose that the existence of a Negro culture in America depends on whether or not it produced a literature, it can be said that insofar as these novelists create complex and genuine personalities in their writing, Negro culture in America has found self-consciousness and articulation.

Cross Damon, the hero of *The Outsider*, is a Chicago Negro, unhappily married, menaced by a pregnant mistress, and deeply in debt. Caught in a subway accident, he plants his identification papers on a badly mangled corpse and, having chosen a new personality for himself, devotes the remainder of his life to concealing who he really is. This involves a flight to New York, joining the Communist party, and several murders. In essence, *The Outsider* is really another *Native Son*, and Cross Damon another Bigger Thomas, no more. Like *Native Son*, *The Outsider* is full of inconsistencies and contradictions. Most of the book is very boring, with long passages of didactic and quasi-philosophical prose. The jargon of popularized psychology and existentialism washes over the characters without clarifying them:

> But, above all, Dot had been to him a representation of a personal hunger which he had projected out of his heart on her, and the two of them—Dot and what she subjectively meant to him—had been something he had not been able to cope with with satisfaction to himself and honor to her. There had been no element of sadism in his love for Dot.

The theme of the book is flight: ". . . he was fleeing to escape his identity, his old hateful consciousness." Cross Damon runs away from everything—himself, his life, society, thought—everything, that is, except violence. In violence—much as Mr. Wright tries to deny it—he finds his being. The story comes to life only when Cross is meditating or performing some act of violence: "He stepped upon the crushed body, feeling his shoes sinking into the lifeless flesh and seeing blood bubbling from the woman's mouth as his weight bore down on her breast." This impulse toward a moment of supreme destruction and horror is typical of Mr. Wright's vision. Invariably his heroes are swept into the dumb and helpless backwashes of raging violence and sexuality—the conventional Negro hallmark and fate.

ALL through *The Outsider*, Mr. Wright keeps telling us that the least important thing about his hero is that he is a Negro: "For Cross had had no party, no myths, no tradition, no race, no soil, no culture, and no ideas. . . ." He is trying thus to portray modern man in his existential loneliness—

> Cross had to discover what was good or evil through his own actions, which were more exacting than the edicts of any God because it was he alone who had to bear the brunt of their consequences with a sense of absoluteness made intolerable by knowing that this life of his was all he had and would ever have.

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—but in fact, instead of "universalizing" the Negro, he simply denies the Negro's experience and reality. It is impossible that a man should have "no race, no soil, no culture, and no ideas." In his self-conscious effort to turn his hero into a symbol of "modern man," Mr. Wright has simply reasserted that African "nothingness" which represented the failure of earlier writers to come into living relation with Negro life. Mr. Wright, it turns out, is unable to say anything at all about being a Negro except that to be a Negro is to be incoherent, and to do violence and murder. The point is not that violence and murder are absent from Negro life—I am not suggesting that Mr. Wright should have written a more "positive" novel—but that the figure of Cross Damon is not given enough reality to permit us an insight into these phenomena. Not by presenting a Negro murderer, but by denying in effect that the murderer is a Negro, Mr. Wright has again played into the hands of those who despise his people. Emptying his hero's life of all content—except that "existential" content which evades reality through the pretense of trying to grapple with it on its "deepest" level—he has left us with only the familiar old black chasm. From the question of identity Cross Damon makes a clean getaway; Mr. Wright leaves American Negro life as undiscovered and inarticulate as if he had never actually participated in it.

RALPH ELLISON'S *Invisible Man* is a basically comic work in the picaresque tradition, influenced especially by the novels of Louis-Ferdinand Céline. The hero of *Invisible Man* just happens to be a Negro, and everything he is and does includes ultimately the experience of all modern men. But this is not accomplished by abstraction; Mr. Ellison has managed to realize the fact of his hero's being a Negro in exactly the same way as 19th-century novelists realized their characters' being French or Russian or middle class: by making it the chief fact of their lives, something they take for granted and would not think of denying. Mr. Ellison displays an unapologetic relish for the concrete richness of Negro living—the tremendous variety of its speech, its music, its food, even its perversities.

Here are three random examples from the many kinds of Negro speech he transcribes:

A preacher at a Negro college:

> Picture it, my young friends: The clouds of darkness all over the land, black folk and white folk full of fear and hate, wanting to go forward, but each fearful of the other. . . . All this . . . had been told and retold throughout the land, inspiring a humble but fast-rising people.

A West Indian African Nationalist:

> Don't deny you'self! It took a billion gallons of black blood to make you. Recognize you'self inside and you wan the kings among men! A mahn knows he's a mahn when he got not'ing, when he's naked—nobody have to tell him that. You six foot tall, mahn. You young and intelligent. You black and beautiful—don't let 'em tell you different! You wasn't them t'ings you be dead, mahn. Dead! I'd have killed you, mahn. Ras the Exhorter raised up his knife and tried to do it, but he could not do it. Why don't you do it? I ask myself. I will do it now, I say; but somet'ing tell me, "No, No. You might be killing your black king!" And I say, yas, yas! So I accept your humiliating ahction. Ras recognized your black possibilities, mahn.

A Harlem sharpster:

> Me? I'm over on the side where some stud done broke in a store and is selling cold beer out the window—Done gone in to business, man; I was drinking me some Budweiser and digging the doings—when here comes the cops up the street, riding like cowboys, man; and when ole Ras-the-what's-his-name sees 'em he lets out a roar like a lion and rears way back and starts shooting spurs into the hoss's ass as fast as nickels falling in the subway at going-home time—and gaawddam! that's when you ought to seen him! Say, gimme a taste, there, fella.

ALTHOUGH this exploitation of his own milieu seems a simple enough thing to expect of a novelist, the measure of Mr. Ellison's achievement is apparent when we realize that he is the first Negro to have done it convincingly. And, correlatively perhaps, his hero is the only Negro in modern fiction who has no crippling desire to be white. The

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precondition of Mr. Ellison's work is the well-assimilated, conscious experience of Negro culture, not as independent or entirely distinct, but as one of the many highly developed sub-cultures that exist in America. The book offers innumerable incidents and observations which demonstrate this; in fact, *Invisible Man* impresses one as being perhaps overcrowded with incident, leaving little room to turn around in. The formless, expansive picaresque novel, however, is just the right thing for a novelist who is in the act of discovering a culture. And in discovering this culture, Mr. Ellison's hero begins to find out about the personality he is seeking.

Where "the outsider" fled from his Negro identity, the "invisible man" rushes toward it and is almost submerged in the plenitude and diversity of Negro life. In a wonderfully comic chapter, the hero, fleeing both from the hooligans of Ras, the African Nationalist, and from the Communists, disguises himself by putting on dark glasses and a hat. He is immediately mistaken by all Harlem for a character named Rinehart, who, it turns out, is an enigma himself, a man of many identities—a racketeer, a reverend, a philanthropist, a great lover. Everyone knows Rinehart, it seems, but nobody knows who he is; and as the hero, the "invisible man," makes this discovery, the comic absurdity of his position dawns on him, and he finds in the possibilities that exist in his Harlem world a richness he had never before supposed:

> Still, could he be all of them: Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rine the lover and Rinehart the Reverend? Could he himself be both rind and heart. . . . His world was possibility and he knew it. . . . The world in which we lived was without boundaries. A vast seething, hot world of fluidity, and Rine the rascal was at home. . . . You could actually make yourself anew. The notion was frightening. . . .

But if Mr. Ellison has appropriated all the secular culture of Harlem, he has not allowed it to vulgarize him; there are, in his book, no Rochesters or Bill Robinsons, nor, for that matter, Cross Damons, foisted upon us as the real thing. *Invisible Man* is, as far as I know, the first novel by a Negro to break away from the old, constrictive ideology; in Ras the Destroyer, Mr. Ellison has absorbed that myth as part of his drama, while through his comedy he has held it at arm's length where it cannot obscure the clarity of his view.

If Mr. Wright refused to consider the fact of being a Negro, and if Mr. Ellison, by assuming it, did not find it necessary to discuss it, James Baldwin has tried to define precisely what it is like. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* may be the most important novel yet written about the American Negro. *The Outsider* fled from Negro identity, *Invisible Man* toward it; *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is a book in which the characters move between two possible identities—identities which represent the limits to the possibilities of life as imposed by Negro culture. In Mr. Baldwin's novel, Negro culture is a different thing altogether from the vacuum of Mr. Wright's Harlem or the maelstrom of Mr. Ellison's. Mr. Wright has no ideas about the limits of culture, because he has hardly any sense of the concrete; and the main flaw in *Invisible Man*—as is seen in the prologue and epilogue—is that Mr. Ellison is unwilling to discover the specific limits to his ample experience. On the other hand, Mr. Baldwin's awareness of the outrageously narrow range of Negro life, and his insistence on its inflexibility, make the "question" of Negro culture, as we have considered it in relation to Mr. Wright and Mr. Ellison, almost irrelevant. Mr. Baldwin's concern with Negro culture is not so much to deny or discover it, but to present it in its pitifully tragic contradictions. His portrayal of Negro life demonstrates how the myth of African savagery is perpetuated among the Negroes themselves both by the condition of the Negro community in America and by the institution that affords their principal refuge from that savagery, religion.

John Grimes, the young hero of the novel, is an intelligent boy, sensitive to his intellectual abilities and his difference from other Negroes, and has resolved to revolt. "For the

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had made his decision. He would not be like his father, or his father's fathers. He would have another life." In Central Park he climbs a hill, and surveys from its eminence the spires of the city downtown—his future dominion:

> Before him, then, the slope stretched upward, and above it the brilliant sky, and beyond it, cloudy, and far away, he saw the skyline of New York. He did not know why, but there arose in him an exultation and a sense of power, and he ran up the hill like an engine, or a madman, willing to throw himself headlong into the city that glowed before him. . . . For it was his; the inhabitants of the city had told him it was his; he had but to run down, crying, and they would take him to their hearts and show him wonders his eyes had never seen.

This, he believes, will be his rich destiny, one that he may possess only if he sheds, like a butterfly shedding its cocoon, the world of his family, their life of fanatic religion, the culture of Harlem, of the Negroes.

But his dreams and desires are never to be fulfilled, for that evening at the "tarry service" of the violent Baptist sect of which his father is a deacon, John succumbs to his guilt and to his longings for reconciliation with his family, with his Negro-ness, and with God, and is seized by a religious convulsion. In submitting to it he chooses one of the two fates allowed the Negro. If he were to revolt, as so many in his family had done, the world would strike him down. If, on the other hand, he accepts the literal nothingness of what the world offers, and forfeits his hopes for a better life on earth, he will be accepting the burden of religion and of being a Negro. Suspended over the mouth of Hell, John sees the dreadful future that lies in store for him if he tries to escape what Mr. Baldwin conceives as the modern Negro's fate: the endurance of calamity, the renunciation of earthly pleasure, the acceptance of no fulfillment—the entire negative side of Christianity. John submits to the call of religion, subscribes to the doctrine of the Gospels, and is, as the book closes, reconciled to his condition.

And yet the lives of his parents are ironic and overwhelming evidence that he will find no rest or consummation even in this marginal way. His conversion, bringing in its wake a momentary breathing spell, a community with his family, and a rich, full sense of his being as a Negro, will sooner or later only aggravate his awareness of oppression, of the violent, gratuitous injustice done him by the world—and so will increase the intensity of his religious life, if it does not eventually destroy it. The life he moves toward as a result of his conversion is tyrannically restrictive, but it is the only "safe" one his culture extends. If John Grimes were to choose "sin"—that is, if he were to try to live the life of a normal American—he would not only be condemned by his religion, but would almost certainly be rejected by the larger culture he would be trying to enter and the society whose restrictions on Negro life set up the painful dualism beneath which he and the rest of the author's characters suffer.

There are two "mountains" in this book. When, at the end, John is "saved" and has begun his tortured ascent of the mountain of Holiness, we feel that the injustice of his condition is subsumed for the moment in the larger, impersonal justice of the novel—the strange justice of tragedy. This is his doom, and there is a rightness about it if only because it is inevitable. But we recall that other "mountain," the hill in Central Park from which John, at the beginning of the book, looked down beneath "the brilliant sky, and beyond it, cloudy and far away, he saw the skyline of New York." It is the same kind of elevation from which, I am sure Mr. Baldwin wants us to remember, Eugène de Rastignac, at the close of *Père Goriot,* surveys Paris. It is the prominence from which all the "young men from the provinces" catch their glimpse of the worlds they are to love and win. But for John Grimes there can be no winning; and when we realize this, that he can stand only on the mountain of Holiness, an otherworldly mountain made of bitterness and renunciation, a mountain where he finds his real identity, the poign-

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ancy of his earlier vision comes upon us with great force.

EXCEPTION may well be taken to the extremity of Mr. Baldwin's view. There is another kind of adjustment to the world that Negroes can and do make—the sort, for example, that the hero of *Invisible Man* manages. It may be argued, however, that a novel like Mr. Baldwin's, which delineates its characters in terms of tragic extremes, makes clearer and more possible, not to say more urgent, that middle ground of adjustment so conspicuously absent from its own domain. Mr. Baldwin has elsewhere trenchantly declared his antipathy to the kind of "protest novel" which ignores the personality of the Negro; now he has written a novel which is the strongest protest that can be made, because it intelligently faces the complex dilemma of its characters.

What it is like to be a Negro is best comprehended in the stories of the earlier lives of the members of John's family, which give to John's religious upheaval a vitality and significance it otherwise would not have. In all their experience there is one overarching similarity:

> There was not, after all, a great difference between the world of the North and that of the South which [they] had fled; there was only this difference: the North promised more. And this similarity: what it promised it did not give, and what it gave, at length and grudgingly with one hand, it took back with the other.

The fundamental quality in the lives of these Negroes is frustration; every demand they make on life is rejected. It can be said this is essentially true for all of us, but it is surely many times truer for the Negroes. For us the larger world which limits our fulfillment and cuts down our demands is almost impersonal—it is the world of nature, or of institutions so old and traditional that they seem themselves almost natural—institutions whose sanctions often appear as kindly in protecting us as they are malevolent in denying our desires. But the Negro inhabits a universe that extends at least the *chance* of fulfillment to everyone but himself. He must work in the midst of wealth and status, but must live and breed on the margins of society; at the same time he covets the material and social felicities as much as anyone—indeed, more than anyone, for since he has so little direct experience of them, their value is magnified. It is not surprising, then, that the excessiveness of the Negroes' sense of sin, so bound up in their desires for the pleasures of the world, is in direct proportion to their distance from the social, material abundance it contains.

Although *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is meticulously planned, and every episode is organic to the governing conception, it is not primarily a novel of delicate relations, subtle qualifications, and minutely discriminated personalities. There is instead a force above the characters and their relations—adequately realized though they are—which creates an impression of terrible uniformity and strangeness. One of the best things this novel does is to capture all the uniqueness, foreignness, and exoticism of Negro life. Like an anthropologist, Mr. Baldwin shows us these people under the aspect of homogeneity; their individual lives represent their collective fate. Misled by our impulses to atone for the oppression of the Negroes, we have too often denied them a character distinct from our own—that is, we have reversed the myth of Africa. In his intense, narrow vision (a vision not less true because of its limitation), Mr. Baldwin shows the basic separateness of his people without making them depersonalized savages.

MR. BALDWIN'S fiction is much like that of another very talented contemporary, Saul Bellow. In his second novel, *The Victim*, Mr. Bellow set out to do something very like what Mr. Baldwin had done—to define just what it is like to be an assimilated American Jew. The main character in *The Victim* is also suspended between two possibilities of existence in very much the same way as Mr. Baldwin's Negroes are—although the Jewish possibilities are differ-

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ent from the Negro possibilities. What it is like to be an American Jew today is a precarious thing for a novel to concern itself with, of course, since Jewish culture has undergone a degree of assimilation that the Negro community has hardly begun to approach. Thus, one of the main difficulties in writing about the modern American Jew comes from having to reckon with his "cosmopolitanism." This is not the case for the Negro writer; his people have not had much access to those respectable, functional positions in society through which the Jews long ago began to acquire sophistication and bring their identity into contact with the world outside the ghetto. The chief difficulty for a Negro writer is just the reverse: he must continually salvage from the strangeness and narrowness of his community something to link him to Western man and open up that common ground of culture with the white man which will save him from the final deadliness of his isolation. The point of the parallel between Jew and Negro lies in just this: that where the Jew is becoming more and more anxious to rediscover that by now elusive quality which makes him Jewish, the Negro is becoming more and more anxious to discover his kinship with the white race and with human history—for it is surely true that the Negroes themselves believe, however unwillingly, in their own "savagery." The Jew, it might be said, is hunting for his lost separateness—the Negro, for his unbestowed universality.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN is not a "religious novel" in any of the ways we have recently come to expect; it is not interested in religious dogma, nor in the disparagement of it. Religion is rather the vehicle of this novel, its means of expression, and not its primary concern. Nevertheless, Mr. Baldwin has given religion that organic function it rarely possesses in the modern novel. The Negroes are perhaps the only people today in whose culture the literalness of Christianity has been preserved, and who can really assert that they are like the Jews in Egypt or the Christians in Rome. Mr. Baldwin's ability to make the fact of religion relevant and central to the lives of his characters is a testimony to his intelligent use of an existing tradition. Religion in this book is *the* institution of Negro society, and thus—just as is the case with secular Negro life in *Invisible Man*—demands no special treatment or sophistical justification to insure its reality. Yet Mr. Baldwin does not, I think, make the error of claiming more for the religion of these Negroes than it can show—that religion offers coherence to otherwise chaotic lives and permits them to go on living without destroying themselves. It does not cure their ailments, or stop their sinning, or change their personalities; while preserving their hold on life it also kills much of their response to it. There is none of the generosity in their religion characteristic of Christianity at its highest, and it is one of the most disturbing things about this brilliant novel that it extends neither to the characters nor to the reader that generosity characteristic of the best novels—the kind of generosity exemplified, for example, in George Eliot's portrayal of Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*, Dostoevsky's Verhovensky in *The Possessed*, or James's Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*. The ability of these novelists to force us into sympathy with really wicked characters is a species of detachment still beyond Mr. Baldwin's powers. His treatment of Gabriel, John's father (who is, significantly, not his real father), seems to me to bear traces of mere vindictiveness. This is a very serious flaw, since the working out of a relation between John and his father is central to the main theme of the book—John's discovery of himself.

It must be said also that as the episodes of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* unfold, a rather nasty kind of irony begins to assert itself. Although each event in the novel conveys both a religious import and an awareness that life is being sacrificed for religion's sake, Mr. Baldwin's desire to give both points of view has led him in some places to substitute a poised indecisive-

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ness for his usual superb impersonality. Unfortunately, the full compassion that John's fate should elicit sometimes resides merely on the surface of the prose, in formal gestures:

> And the dust made him cough and retch; in his turning the center of the whole earth shifted, making of space a sheer void and a mockery of order, and balance, and time. Nothing remained: all was swallowed up in chaos. And: *Is this it?* John's terrified soul inquired—*What is it?*—to no purpose, receiving no answer. Only the ironic voice insisted once more that he rise from that filthy floor if he did not want to become like all the other niggers.

There are two kinds of rhetoric at work in this passage. The first is inflated—"swallowed up in chaos," etc.—and is supposed to convey John's torment. The "ironic voice" of the last sentence, on the other hand, represents Mr. Baldwin's attempt to balance or deflate the extravagance of his hero's religious experience. This is characteristic of almost every passage in the section that deals with the conversion. Clearly, however, neither term is adequately presented, nor are the two impulses they represent reconciled. The clichés in the first part of the passage, and the uneasiness in "filthy" and "nigger," are sufficient evidence for the unsureness of touch which blemishes the last section of the book. The truth is that Mr. Baldwin is not sure of what he wants to say, finally, and he disguises this uncertainty in an affected distance from his material. This indecisiveness, with its compensating impulse toward neatness, seems to me a real fault. It leads to a certain falseness of tone and withholding of commitment—one might almost say of Mr. Baldwin's own identity—that constrict the novel and divest it of moral backbone. This is very much like that faulty irony in Hardy's novels, which eats away at the stature of the characters, forcing them to fit an idea which dominates the novelist's mind; T. S. Eliot's comment on Hardy applies equally to Mr. Baldwin: "He will leave nothing to nature, but will always be giving one last turn of the screw himself."

In considering these three novels and their backgrounds, certain things become apparent.

The Negro remains, for the most part, still locked inside his own world, looking toward the white world outside and longing to be there; and it is his deep hatred of his own condition, even of his own body, that the Negro novelist must deal with. As long as he despises his existence, the Negro will try to escape it; and Mr. Ellison and Mr. Baldwin demonstrate how the Negro's attempt to cut the traces of his personality can be turned to account—a reconciliation beyond Mr. Wright's comprehension. It is the destiny of the Negro to be surrounded by a world which he knows is better and more beautiful than the one he must inhabit; but by constantly doubting his identity, and by manipulating it, he tries to arrive somehow closer to that world outside.

Without a doubt the Negroes in America have a kind of life that is fully capable of producing good literature; it has taken a long time to develop—much longer than most of us, since we are Americans, believed necessary—and no doubt was there long before any of us bothered to think about it. The fact of that life is as much demonstrated by Mr. Wright's disastrous attempt to deny it as it is by its turning out two first-rate writers like Mr. Ellison and Mr. Baldwin, whose novels, in almost complete opposition at all points, are both valid and suggestive in relation to the same problem. These novels show us that today as much as ever a writer of genius and intelligence can master and re-interpret the world around him, and does not invariably need aristocratic courts or ruined abbies or some impossible kind of society to spoon-feed him into creativity.

And indeed, the failure of Mr. Wright and the success of Mr. Ellison and Mr. Baldwin suggest again that—for the novelist and for ourselves—men are often most human where they are most different, and in their diversity is the key to their ultimate likeness.

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

COUNTY OFFICIAL

Pincus Margulies of Ramapo

DONALD PANETH

ROCKLAND COUNTY, in the southeastern part of New York State, is a suburban region twenty miles from New York City. It contains many small lakes and truck farms and apple orchards and villages, and is bordered on the east by the Hudson River and on the west by the Ramapo Mountains. With a population of 89,000 and an area of 178 square miles, it is divided into five townships—Stony Point, Haverstraw, Clarkstown, Orangetown, and Ramapo. The county is traditionally Republican, being populated mostly by farmers, local businessmen, and commuting executives.

Pincus Margulies of Ladentown, a little hamlet at the base of the Ramapos, was an official of the county for thirty-five years. He settled there in 1904, and after an unsteady beginning as a country storekeeper, became a prosperous local businessman and an important county official. He was a Republican, and a member of the party's county committee—an intimate and deputy of the county leaders. In 1917 he was elected Justice of the Peace, and in 1937 he became Supervisor of the township of Ramapo; several years later he was elected chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Rockland County. At his death last year, "Pinc" was also a notary, a real estate broker, a director of two local banks, and a member of several organizations.

Pinc was a slim, gray-haired man of medium height. He had a round face and a wide mouth, and was almost blind in his right eye, having been hit by a BB shot when a child. He was married and the father of five children, lived unpretentiously over his store, didn't smoke or drink, and drove his own car. He was the first Jewish Supervisor in the county, and he was reelected several times despite occasional, but subdued, anti-Semitic whisperings.

Pinc was a good politician who had a shrewd mind, friendly manner, and realistic outlook; he was a competent official. He was staunch in his loyalty—to the GOP—and expedient in his methods. He was at bottom quiet and gentlemanly, but like most politicians, had acquired a glib, jocular exterior. He was generous with political favors, and he liked to play pinochle, attend conventions, and dress well. "Pinc was always buying suits," one of his friends recalls. "He dressed like a banker, more or less. Very meticulous." He also liked to listen to classical music, read the *Herald Tribune*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Newsweek*, and occasionally a "good, clean" novel. His favorite foods were clam chowder, fish, steak, chicken, and lemon cookies.

THE part the Jewish storekeeper has played as pioneer and missionary of civilization in the backwoods and on the frontiers of this country deserves to be better known than it is. Then it would be seen to constitute a chapter all by itself in the history of the settling of our continent by people from overseas. Here is one small episode from that chapter, recent and very close to home. DONALD PANETH, who tells the tale, is a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, his last appearance having been in the July 1953 issue with the description of an Irish bar in New York. Mr. Paneth was born in New York in 1927 and was for several years a reporter on the New York *Times*. He is now at work on a book about his native city.

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He was born in Poland in 1878, and had come to the United States with his parents and brother when he was three. His mother, Martha, was a quiet, religious woman and his father, Abraham, a tall, slim man who had served in the Czar's army. His father owned a butcher shop on the Lower East Side, was a Democratic precinct captain, and dabbled in real estate. Pincus's childhood was comfortable and placid. He played baseball, went to the neighborhood settlement house and to its summer camp near Ladentown (where he was later to settle), and delivered orders for his father. He was an average student, who attended public school until the eighth grade and Hebrew school until his Bar Mitzvah without much interest in either.

He left school at the age of thirteen, and worked for two years in his father's shop; then his mother died of a tubercular throat, and soon after he got a job as apprentice to a sign-maker in midtown. He worked for the sign-maker several years, constructing large metal signs for banks, office buildings, and stores, meanwhile advancing from apprentice to shop foreman. When he was twenty-three years old he married. Three years later he and his wife, Fannie, a big, hearty, robust girl who came from Gabriels, New York, a small town in the Adirondacks, moved to Ladentown for his health. He had developed a serious cough on the job, and it was suggested he settle in the country, which he immediately did. "He knew of the town," his son Harold says, "and liked the idea of owning a country store. That's how he came up here."

LADENTOWN, situated on Route 202 near the Ramapo villages of Suffern and Spring Valley, was a hamlet with a population of 150, a general store, three saloons, a Methodist church, and several old houses. Michel Laden, its first resident, had opened a tavern and trading store there in 1816. The general store was located at the roadside on two acres of land with a house and a barn. Its façade was gray with a low false front and four white posts supporting a porch roof; its interior was crowded with counters, display cases, and shelves, in the middle of which was a pot-bellied stove. A pendulum clock and a deer head were mounted on the wall opposite the door. Pinc bought the store from its retiring owner for $600, and set to work: life in the country in 1904 was isolated, homespun, and difficult. Pinc and his wife had no bathroom, telephone, electricity, or automobile. They used kerosene lamps and an outhouse, and Pinc carried water from a spring while his wife cooked over a wood fire.

Though today it hardly seems likely, Ladentown was then a tough, hard-drinking place, and Pinc wasn't welcome. Many "Jackson Whites," poor mountain folk, lived in the nearby Ramapos, and on Saturday night they would come down to drink and brawl in the town, and as for Pinc himself, his neighbors were frankly hostile to him—he was "city folk," a stranger and a Jew—and they threatened to burn him out if he didn't leave.

He stayed on, nervously but stubbornly, and a feud began. "They started rows in the store," Harold says, "and threatened to beat him up. They built fires in the fields at night to scare him. They burnt down the barn of a neighbor who traded at his store, and my parents took turns sitting up at night to watch for trespassers." This went on fitfully and thinned his trade for several years—until 1910. Then, one summer evening, someone rolled a barrel of salt pork off the porch of the store into the road. Pinc went to the door, and was fired at twice. He ran inside, bolted the door, put out the lights, and phoned (he now had a phone) for the sheriff. "Who came out the *next* day," Harold says. Fannie then asked her brother Abe to come down from the Adirondacks. Abe, who is now the chief of police of Ramapo Township, was a tall, strongly built, truculent young man. He put an end to the feud.

"I just stayed around," he says. "Threw them out of the store, had five or six fistfights. I had a gun, but I didn't tote it. It was a plain row, and I understood it, I had seen these guys before. They admired people who stood up to them and beat hell out of them. All you had to do was lick the bully, and they liked you and thought you were O.K. and stopped the rough stuff. As long as they couldn't frighten you you were all right."

PINC'S trade began to grow after the feud ended. Neighbors, farming families, and mountain folk became his steady customers.

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His store was open weekdays and Sunday from 7 A.M. to midnight, and he sold groceries, tobacco, lard, plate beef, poultry, feed, drygoods, thread, boots, lanterns, farm tools. He also had a horse, Kit, and a small open wagon (in the winter, a sleigh) in which he went about getting and filling orders; he had a circular route of twenty-five miles, down Camp Hill Road to Pomona and back on a by-road.

Pinc lived simply and frugally. He was a sober man, seldom left the county or went to New York. He liked to play pinochle, root for McGraw's Giants, and go to the movies. Three girls and two boys, Martha, Blanche, Hazel, Harold, and Max were born. With peace brought by his brother-in-law, he began to contribute to the local Methodist church—he wasn't religious himself and he wanted to be amiable—his children attended its Sunday school, and his wife belonged to its Ladies' Aid Society. His store itself soon became a place at which to meet in the evening, and neighbors got around his stove to drink a beer, and "chaw" tobacco, and talk. He and his neighbors talked about crops, local events, and politics—and told country yarns. "My brother, George. He was so slow movin' once he was choppin' down a tree and when he got to t'other side his axe handle had rotted."

BUT in some ways Pinc became friendliest of all with the Ramapo mountain folk, the "Jackson Whites." The Ramapo Mountains are a steep, very rocky, densely wooded range. Craggy and inhospitable, they rise to nearly 1,100 feet, and there are no roads, only trails, through them. Deer and beaver, fox and wild dogs, rattlesnakes and copperheads still abound in them. In 1910, perhaps 3,000 Jackson Whites were living in the Ramapos, a poor, clannish, illiterate group of people isolated by a curious past. They were superstitious—you can't die in a feather bed, it's bad luck to leave a house by a different door than the one by which you enter—and they distrusted strangers. They lived in cabins on the mountain slopes, gardening, hunting and fishing, and picking berries; they were good shots, and could walk long distances over rough trails. Their ancestors were Tuscarora Indians, prostitutes from England, Hessian deserters, Colonial highwaymen, and runaway slaves—all of whom had come together in the Ramapos in the 18th century. The Tuscaroras had lived in North Carolina until 1711, when white settlers, avenging a massacre, attacked them and captured and killed their chiefs. The tribe migrated northwards, reached New York State, and became the Sixth Nation of the Iroquois. During the Revolutionary War Claudius Smith, a highwayman, and his band hid in two great caves on Round Mountain, whence they looted the countryside, stealing horses and cattle which they sold to the British. When Smith was captured and hanged in 1779 his followers fled deeper into the Ramapos. The English prostitutes came shortly afterwards. At the beginning of the war the British had got a trader named Jackson to bring 3,500 women to New York for their troops; after they evacuated the city at the end of the war, these women were driven out into the countryside by the townspeople, and finally found refuge in the Ramapos. Later Hessian deserters and runaway slaves joined them, and of their children some were white, some had the characteristics of Indians or Negroes, and some were albinos.

The Jackson Whites traded at Pinc's store. They worked sometimes—in the brickyards at Haverstraw, in charcoal pits in the mountains—but usually they had no cash. Pinc sympathized with them, didn't snub, cheat, or bait them, as many of the townspeople did, and he gave them groceries on credit, or in exchange for their handicrafts. They wove berry, bushel, market, and clothes baskets and carved ladles, butter paddles, scoops, and axe handles from maple and white wood, which Pinc sold to markets in New York and elsewhere. The butter paddles were bought by grocers, the baskets by farmers and housewives, the scoops by fishermen (to bail small boats). The Jackson Whites liked Pinc, discussed their family troubles, illnesses, and quarrels with him, and asked for his advice. Also, he induced many couples among them to become legally married. When they died they sometimes left him their cabins and homesteads. Today the Jackson Whites have dwindled to about 500; the automobile, world war, compulsory education, and outside jobs penetrated their isolation, and now they are dispersing into the surrounding villages and towns.

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As his trade grew, Pinc began to reach out, he was ambitious and he liked to get around. He bought a delivery truck, the first in the county, and became a notary and a fire warden; unofficially, he also distributed food to needy neighbors, for which he was paid by the Overseer of the Poor in Spring Valley. As early as 1912 he was elected a Republican county committeeman —"The party felt Pinc could deliver the Ladentown vote," a local newspaperman says. "He was popular with his neighbors and the Jackson Whites, and they were solid Republican voters"—and the next year, he was the GOP candidate for Justice of the Peace of Ramapo Township. He lost by eighteen votes, but ran again and was elected four years later.

Pinc was Justice of the Peace twenty years. He was renominated and reelected four times, in 1921, 1925, 1929, and 1933. He was a capable and respected Justice of the Peace, a part-time office. He held court once a week, married twenty or so couples a year, and earned a small salary. He had jurisdiction in civil suits up to $200 and in misdemeanors such as disorderly conduct, but sent other cases to court in New City, the county seat, nineteen miles away. Pinc held court on Wednesday evenings around his dining room table. He called everyone by his first name, and he issued summonses or imposed fines, made judgments or reserved decision, while those next on the calendar waited in his store near the stove. Occasionally he had to arbitrate a case of wife-beating or chicken-stealing, but most of the time he judged small civil suits. Plaintiffs contended "that the defendant refuses to return a loan of $65," or "that his cow got into my garden and trampled everything in there," or "that his truck ran over my foot, and I couldn't work for six days thereafter," or "that I lost a wash which went to his laundry."

Pinc's life and his own personality became more complicated. He rebuilt and expanded his house and put up a small garage and filling station next to his store. His store flourished—he now sold groceries in bulk to summer camps in the mountains—and he became a real estate broker. Soon he was a well-known figure in the county, a man who enjoyed chatting with people, going to church suppers, holding "yarn-telling" contests, and running for office. He was entirely uninterested in religion, and gave his children no special Jewish upbringing, contributing freely to the local church as well as a nearby synagogue. He lived in a regular, unhurried way, according to the basic rhythm of life in the country. Above all, he liked the contacts, the modicum of power, and the prestige he had as Justice of the Peace.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, in 1937, Pinc was appointed Supervisor of the township of Ramapo. A state auditor, checking the records of the township, had found several inconsistencies, and in February James J. Brown, the Supervisor for twenty-one years, was arraigned in Supreme Court, charged with "falsifying public records and misappropriating public funds." Brown pleaded guilty, returned the money he had stolen, and was sentenced to a light jail term; Pinc, meanwhile, resigned as Justice of the Peace, and was appointed interim Supervisor by the town board—and elected to that office in November. "I'll tell you," a local newspaperman says, "the powers that be looked around, and Pinc was on the doorstep, and they said, 'Well, here is our boy.' Pinc was popular and honest, but loyal, and they did it for the looks, following the classic pattern of machine politics. They controlled him: they wouldn't pick a man they couldn't control. Incidentally, Brown didn't serve his sentence. He got sick and went to the hospital, and it was commuted by the governor."

Most of the total area of New York State is occupied by rural and suburban counties, like Rockland, though, of course, most of the population of the state is concentrated in a few cities—New York, Albany, Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse. The counties are in turn subdivided into townships each of which includes several villages and hamlets. A Board of Supervisors, with one Supervisor for each township, runs the county. The board meets regularly at the county seat; it appoints officials, administers state and local laws, fixes tax rates, and lets construction and repair contracts. Throughout the state (and the country at large) the Republican and Democratic parties are organized on a county basis, and, like any of the metropolitan counties—Bronx or Kings

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or New York—the rural county is also an important political unit. The inner circle may be smaller, the atmosphere less intense, the machine somewhat less ruthless, but the issues are much the same, and the politics, both intra-party and inner-party, are usually as subtle and fierce as in the metropolis. The objectives are to retain, or achieve, power.

The township of which Pinc became Supervisor comprised several villages and hamlets with populations of between 150 and 5,000. It was pretty, quiet, and hilly, had large apple orchards and truck and dairy farms, and was the suburban home of many businessmen and commuters, the largest villages being Suffern and Spring Valley. The township, like the county, was governed by a board of five—the Supervisor and four councilmen; and in addition, the villages elected mayors and village boards. Similarly, the county and each of the townships had separate budgets. In 1952, for example, the county had a budget of $3,000,000, and the township of Ramapo a budget of $375,000. By a complicated, clumsy, and expensive system of administration, the county and the township each maintained separate but overlapping police forces, attorneys, welfare officers, tax assessors, treasurers, road commissioners. The office of the township was in Suffern, a busy, attractive village beneath the Ramapo Mountains. The office, in a small, low building on Main Street, where the board met and a few clerks worked, was neat and hushed.

Pinc worked about twenty hours a week as Supervisor; it was a part-time job that paid him $8,400 a year. Officially, he administered county and state laws and resolutions, and attended meetings of the town board in Suffern and of the Board of Supervisors in New City; he was chairman of the town board which considered such matters as local tax rates, street lighting, police regulations, garbage disposal, and road repair. In his official role Pinc attended many functions too—meetings, ceremonies, dinners—although he was a poor speaker and did not often make speeches. His most significant task was to confer frequently on official and political policy with the Republican leaders of the county. They would meet for lunch or dinner, cards or fishing, and discuss the issues, consider the alternatives, and make the decisions, outlining his course.

As his career as an official advanced, Pinc, with a feeling of importance, slowly spread out in new directions. He had been a Mason, and now he joined the Rotary Club of Spring Valley and the Ramapo Lodge, Knights of Pythias. And he now joined three synagogues, one in Suffern, two in Spring Valley. He became a director of the First National Bank in Spring Valley and a director of the Provident Savings and Loan Association in Haverstraw. He sold his store to his son Harold in 1944, and later sold some land in the Ramapos to the state for Palisades Interstate Park.

He became a prominent county politician, and was absorbed into the inner circle of politicians and businessmen that dominated county affairs. He became especially friendly with John Dodd, Ramapo Road Commissioner; Anthony Cucculo, truck operator and president of the West Shore Construction Company in Suffern; County (now Supreme Court) Judge Robert Doscher; and Charles W. Hawkins, president of the First National Bank in Spring Valley and chairman of the Rockland County Republican party. He, himself, became a skillful politician, who with the county leaders helped plan strategy, name candidates, get out the vote, and dispense patronage. Part of his effectiveness was owed to the fact that he retained much of his early simple and friendly manner. "Pinc was a very nice guy, a gentleman," one local resident says, "but he was a good politician, he played the game. He talked to everybody—he was the first to congratulate or sympathize—but he talked to everybody the same way. He learned how to slap people on the back *and* how to push them out of the way. He was shrewd as hell, and very flexible, his eye always on the main chance. He was able to evade the issues. He made friends with his enemies, sometimes putting them on the payroll. He did many people favors, like killing a traffic ticket or getting a summer job for a kid home from school; Pinc might not do you a favor, but he would never say no."

With party support, Pinc was elected chairman of the Board of Supervisors in 1946 (the chief executive office in the county), and reelected Supervisor of Ramapo every other year through 1951. "Pinc liked being a leader around here," a former col-

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league, a township official, says. "And he ran his office his own way, he never appointed a deputy Supervisor." While Pinc was Supervisor the county Republican party was strong and well organized, as it remains today, and the Democratic party was small and apathetic and seldom nominated important candidates. Pinc campaigned for reelection, and won effortlessly on five occasions, frequently running without opposition. Twice, in 1947 and 1951, he was mildly challenged by the Democratic nominee, Harold A. Roose of Pomona. Roose, a middle-aged local businessman and vice-chairman of the county Democratic party, campaigned on a "reform" platform. He declared that the county government was antiquated, that the county and townships and villages didn't require overlapping services, that the need was for a county-wide administration. He charged that the GOP refused to consider streamlining the county government because it would eliminate many jobs, much patronage. Pinc ignored these charges, decided to rely on his own popularity and his party's strength for reelection, and was reelected each time by a clear majority—in 1947 by 4,632 votes to 1,510 and in 1951 by 4,392 votes to 1,652.

While Supervisor, Pinc continued to live quietly but comfortably. He and his wife lived in their house over the store even after he had sold it to his son. He enjoyed going to the movies and watching baseball on television; occasionally he went fishing with other township officials or, with his wife, to conventions in Rochester, Buffalo, Saranac Lake. Meanwhile his children finished school, went into business and married—two married Jews. (He had seven grandchildren, three boys and four girls, before he died.) Max was graduated from Norwich University and became an insurance broker in Hillburn, near Suffern; Martha and Blanche attended Teachers College in Oneonta, New York, and both later married and went to live in Haverstraw; Hazel was graduated from New York University and became a grade-school teacher in Spring Valley. Harold, who bought the store, was educated at the Chauncey Hall School in Boston, and in 1944 returned to live in Ladentown after working ten years in Nyack for the Rockland Light and Power Company and serving for two years in the Air Force. Today Ladentown is a green, sleepy place, and trade is usually slow in the store. Housewives chat and buy groceries, children scamper in for candy and ice cream, slamming the screen door, truck drivers stop for gas and cigarettes. A neighbor requests a paper to be notarized or a fire permit to burn some brush.

DURING the election of 1951, though Pinc was reelected Supervisor, the GOP lost control of the county and of the Board of Supervisors for the first time in eighteen years. The Democratic party won contests in three of the five townships—instead of two as they usually did—and as a result Pinc, the Republican chairman of the Board, was replaced by a Democrat; soon after, he was the guest of honor at the first of several testimonial dinners at which his party and other groups eulogized him with speeches, gifts, and scrolls.

That same fall, five years after the death of his wife, Pinc remarried, wedding his wife's sister, a widow living in Haverstraw. Then, less than a year later, on October 26, 1952, a tragedy occurred in the Ramapo Mountains which shocked and upset him deeply. Two men, Robert Nugent, town clerk of the township of Ramapo, and Charles E. Simpson, a banker of Saddle River, New Jersey, were found murdered in Sterling Forest where they had gone hunting. They had been shot to death. Pinc joined the police investigating the double murder (which still remains unsolved), suffered two heart attacks within the next ten days, and died in a local hospital on November 14. "Pinc was given a very big funeral in Spring Valley," one township official recalls. "A thousand people attended, and it tied up traffic on Main Street for two hours."

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

HOW SHALL WE KNOW THE MESSIAH?

MAIMONIDES

It is only fitting that this department should often turn to the writings of Maimonides, the great Jewish philosopher and sage, who was born in Cordova, Spain, in 1135. This month we publish an extract from Chapters 11 and 12 of the Book of Judges (Book XIV) of the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah), concerning the Messiah and the Messianic Age. Be it noted that Maimonides regards the Messianic Age as one, not in which the Law is superseded and overthrown, but in which Israel can "be free to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb it."

The text given here is taken from Dr. A. M. Hershman's translation of the Book of Judges, Volume III of the Yale Judaica Series, under the general editorship of Julian Obermann, Louis Ginzberg, and Harry A. Wolfson; it is reprinted with the kind permission of the Yale University Press. The third, fourth, and fifth paragraphs below do not appear in the body of the text of the Yale edition, but in Dr. Hershman's introduction.—Ed.

DO NOT think that King Messiah will have to perform signs and wonders, bring anything new into being, revive the dead, or do similar things. It is not so. . . . The general principle is: this Law of ours with its statutes and ordinances [is not subject to change]. It is for ever and all eternity; it is not to be added to or to be taken away from. [Whoever adds aught to it, or takes away aught from it, or misinterprets it, and strips the commandments of their literal sense is an impostor, a wicked man, and a heretic.]

If there arise a king from the House of David who meditates on the Torah, occupies himself with the commandments, as did his ancestor David, observes the precepts prescribed in the Written and the Oral Law, prevails upon Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and to repair its breaches, and fights the battles of the Lord, it may be assumed that he is the Messiah. If he does these things and succeeds, rebuilds the sanctuary on its site, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is beyond all doubt the Messiah.

But if he does not meet with full success, or is slain, it is obvious that he is not the Messiah promised in the Torah. He is to be regarded like all the other wholehearted and worthy kings of the House of David who died and whom the Holy One, blessed be He, raised up to test the multitude, as it is written: *And some of them that are wise shall stumble, to refine among them, and to purify, and to make white, even to the time of the end; for it is yet for the time appointed* (Dan. 11:35).

Even of Jesus of Nazareth, who imagined that he was the Messiah, but was put to death by the court, Daniel had prophesied as it is written: *And the children of the violent among people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision; but they shall stumble* (Dan. 11:14). For has there ever been a greater stumbling than this? All the Prophets affirmed that the Messiah would redeem Israel, save them, gather their dispersed, and confirm the commandments. But he caused Israel to be destroyed by the sword, their remnant to be dispersed and humiliated. He was instrumental in changing the Torah and causing the world to err and serve another beside God.

But it is beyond the human mind to fathom the designs of the Creator; for our ways are not His ways, neither are our thoughts His thoughts. All these matters relating to Jesus of Nazareth and the Ishmael-

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ite (Mohammed) who came after him, only served to clear the way for King Messiah, to prepare the whole world to worship God with one accord, as it is written: *For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent* (Zeph. 3:9). Thus the Messianic hope, the Torah, and the commandments have become familiar topics—topics of conversation (among the inhabitants) of the far isles and many peoples, uncircumcised of heart and flesh. They are discussing these matters and the commandments of the Torah. Some say, "Those commandments were true, but have lost their validity and are no longer binding"; others declare that they had an esoteric meaning and were not intended to be taken literally; that the Messiah has already come and revealed their occult significance. But when the true King Messiah will appear and succeed, be exalted and lifted up, they will forthwith recant and realize that they have inherited naught but lies from their fathers, that their prophets and forebears led them astray.

LET no one think that in the days of the Messiah any of the laws of nature will be set aside, or any innovation be introduced into creation. The world will follow its normal course. The words of Isaiah: *And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid* (Isa. 11:6) are to be understood figuratively, meaning that Israel will live securely among the wicked of the heathens who are likened to wolves and leopards, as it is written: *A wolf of the deserts doth spoil them, a leopard watcheth over their cities* (Jer. 5:6). They will all accept the true religion, and will neither plunder nor destroy, and together with Israel earn a comfortable living in a legitimate way, as it is written: *And the lion shall eat straw like the ox* (Isa. 11:7). All similar expressions used in connection with the Messianic age are metaphorical. . . .

Said the Rabbis: *The sole difference between the present and the Messianic days is delivery from servitude to foreign powers* (B. San. 91b). Taking the words of the Prophets in their literal sense, it appears that the inauguration of the Messianic era will be marked by the war of Gog and Magog; that prior to that war, a prophet will arise to guide Israel and set their hearts aright, as it is written: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet* (Mal. 3:23). He (Elijah) will come neither to declare the clean unclean, nor the unclean clean; neither to disqualify those who are presumed to be of legitimate descent, nor to pronounce qualified those who are presumed to be of illegitimate descent, but to bring peace in the world, as it is said: *And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children* (Mal. 3:24).

Some of our Sages say that the coming of Elijah will precede the advent of the Messiah. But no one is in a position to know the details of this and similar things until they have come to pass. They are not explicitly stated by the Prophets. Nor have the Rabbis any tradition with regard to these matters. They are guided solely by what the Scriptural texts seem to imply. Hence there is a divergence of opinion on the subject. But be that as it may, neither the exact sequence of those events nor the details thereof constitute religious dogmas. No one should ever occupy himself with the legendary themes or spend much time on midrashic statements bearing on this and like subjects. He should not deem them of prime importance, since they lead neither to the fear of God nor to the love of Him. Nor should one calculate the end. Said the Rabbis: Blasted be those who reckon out the end (B. San 97b). One should wait. . . .

The Sages and Prophets did not long for the days of the Messiah that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the heathens, or be exalted by the nations, or that it might eat and drink and rejoice. Their aspiration was that Israel be free to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or disturb it, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come.

In that era there will be neither famine nor war, neither jealousy nor strife. Blessings will be abundant, comforts within the reach of all. The one preoccupation of the whole world will be to know the Lord. Hence Israelites will be very wise, they will know the things that are now concealed and will attain an understanding of their Creator to the utmost capacity of the human mind, as it is written: *For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Isa. 11:9).

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ON THE HORIZON

WHERE YIDDISH THEATER LIVES ON

The Quickening Influence of Its Style

GEORGE ROSS

A GALA NIGHT is not an occasion for presenting *King Lear,* nor is it a time to look for sustained performance. A celebration is at best a gathering of interested people who have come together to mark a significant date with nostalgia and affection. The Yiddish Theater Diamond Jubilee on June 10 was held for just this purpose, and an hour before the doors opened an audience largely of first-generation immigrant Jews collected under the marquee which still advertised Rumshinsky's *Girl of My Dream.* They came to buy Israel Bonds, to meet friends, and to recall the Yiddish Theater. Yiddish audiences are, by now, used less to going to the theater to see a play or a performance than to attending a benefit, hearing a little Yiddish spoken, and having a good laugh or a good cry.

What they saw inside was no great event in theater history. None of the "greats" of Yiddish dramatic literature—David Pinski, Perez Hirschbein, S. Anski, Sholem Asch—was represented, but Avrum Goldfaden who founded the Yiddish theater in Rumania in 1876 was, and so was Jacob Gordin who was responsible for its effective beginning in this country in the early 1890's. The sketches, songs, and plays of Goldfaden and Gordin, crude and commercial as they were, nevertheless were the real beginning of the Yiddish theater as an institution and in a sense represented its present too; and this audience was the same "average" audience which has always supported it. Goldfaden and Gordin wrote nothing that can be called literature, but they left authentic Jewish characters whose names are part of the Yiddish language. When Jacob Kalich, as the master of ceremonies, announced *Shloimke Sharlatan,* by Jacob Gordin, or *Shmendrik* by Avrum Goldfaden, there was applause of recognition. Most of this audience had seen these pieces years ago, or in any case had absorbed these names and characters into their culture at least to the extent that Americans have absorbed "Charlie Chaplin" or "Throttlebottom." And if there were any present of my own generation (I didn't see any) who were seeing these selections for the first time, they had certainly at some time in the family heard of "Shloimke" and "Shmendrik."

We might have wished to see some of the brighter lights among Jewish actors, just as we might have wished for something from the more developed years of Jewish playwriting, but we had a delicious moment of Molly Picon, a tantalizing minute of Aaron Lebedeff, and a glimpse, albeit only a glimpse, in the acting of Nathan Goldberg, Hannah Hollander, Celia Adler, and Men-

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TAKING as his point of departure the celebration of the Yiddish Theater Diamond Jubilee a few months ago, GEORGE ROSS tries to evoke the special qualities which have given the Yiddish theater vitality even when it has not reached a high artistic level, and which, finding their way by devious routes into the general American theater, have made a distinctive contribution to American drama. Mr. Ross is an actor and writer who was born in New York City in 1919. His article "'Death of a Salesman' in the Original," a review of Joseph Buloff's Yiddish production of the Arthur Miller play, appeared in our February 1951 issue.

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achim Rubin, of what Yiddish performance has been and can be. Above all, this night stood as testimony that there has been a Yiddish theater for seventy-five years.

SEVENTY-FIVE years may seem like nothing for one of the oldest peoples in the world, but if we consider the severe religious restrictions against dramatic presentation together with the perpetual wandering of the Jewish people, it is remarkable that they have had a theater at all. (The *Purim-shpiele* which date back to the 5th century, and the published but unproduced plays of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries are interesting to the historian but are not in fact substantial evidence of a living theater.) The Irish had no theater before 1899 and there was no significant Russian theater before the Moscow Art opened in 1897. Our own American stage had no identity of its own before 1900. And if the Yiddish theater has given us no Synge or O'Casey, no Chekhov or Gorki, no Eugene O'Neill or what have you, at its best it has stood high indeed. Anski's *Dybbuk* has become an international classic. Asch's *God of Vengeance,* a play of original power, has played all over Europe. Pinski's *The Treasure* brought him the enthusiastic interest of the general audience in Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater and in the Theatre Guild in New York. I. J. Singer's *Yoshe Kalb* was a fine and moving play, and his *The Brothers Ashkenazi* was a tremendous success by most standards, certainly by those of Broadway.

But this is not the place for comparative history, and nostalgia can lead us nowhere. What, we may ask, if anything, deserves our interest in the Yiddish theater today? "My own generation" is assimilated—or, if you prefer, "Americanized." Its knowledge of Yiddish and of the Jewish style of life is already secondhand, little more than an echo, something only sensed beneath the surface. It manages unconsciously somehow to understand but not read Yiddish, or to read it only in Roman characters. If it has been trained to read Hebrew it rarely understands it. If it comes to a Yiddish theater at all, it is to a theater that is remote and exotic, heard of only through an occasional gasp on Second Avenue or through the nostalgic sighs of non-literary parents. What can this generation find of interest in the dead Yiddish theater? For, to be perfectly candid, there is probably no permanent major Yiddish playwright bequeathed to us. And everyone who speaks of the Yiddish theater delivers an elegy over its grave.

Yet however moribund the Yiddish theater is in fact, its ghost stalks about and may yet inhabit another body. Whenever we come upon any theater that is alive we know that somewhere, somehow, an old spirit has turned up to provide it with some stimulant that has been forgotten or neglected. The Yiddish theater is an old father and it sometimes pays to listen even to its ghost.

The French playwright Jean Giraudoux insisted that the one thing which distinguishes and survives a playwright (he might have said a theater or even a people) is his style. His ideas are always borrowed, and moreover not indefinitely valuable, his plots are never his own, his characters have occurred many times before. Only his style is his own forever. What Giraudoux meant by style was of course not just a characteristic mode or manner of writing, but also a personality, a temperament, a vision. There are things in an artist's life which he may choose to deny or change, but his style belongs to those things which he must use and cannot deny: the things which have chosen him instead of being chosen by him —his childhood, his parentage, his landscape, the particular intonation and vocabulary with which he has learned his language.

THE style of the Yiddish theater, its *tam,* we would do well to attend to. It is an impressive value. I consistently say "theater" because I do not believe we can refer to this style in the plays alone without referring to the actors as well and in fact to the audience—and not only to acting and dramatic techniques, but also to the Jewish character and personality, to Jewish attitudes (not necessarily ethics) toward family, marriage, success, work, homeland, to a way of life, to the particular force or *élan* which belongs to the Yiddish theater alone.

I cannot hope to offer here any full definition of the Yiddish style, but I would like to suggest that the family is the fundamental unit of the Yiddish theater and is the feature more than any other which contributes to and illuminates its style. Family

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is in fact a most important feature of the drama in all of the greatest periods of the theater. The great plays of the Greeks, the Elizabethans, the Jacobeans, the French classicists as well as Molière and Marivaux, the plays of Ibsen and Chekhov, are family plays.

The family is certainly no guarantee of great drama. The soap opera exists on it. But from Shakespeare to the soap opera there is probably nothing which has wider and more persistent appeal. And it is easy to see why the family should be the most economical and resourceful dramatic unit: it is where all relations begin and end. From the purely practical point of view the playwright who starts his hero off with a father and a mother has told us all we need to know in the way of exposition; all the rest is drama. Hamlet reveals himself more in a word with his mother than in all his talk with Horatio, or Ophelia, or even with himself. Lear exists most articulately when he is in direct relation with his daughters. The whole point of Oedipus' search is to discover his father and mother, and the economy and power of the tragedy lies in the fact that the mere discovery is itself the full summation of the tragic action. Drama doesn't really begin until there are two people on the stage, two people in *relation*. And if relation is most deeply set in the family, it is no wonder that the greatest plays are involved with it.

The Yiddish stage is peopled with big men with big voices, family men, big with dignity and responsibility. They don't take off their shirts, they don't commit rape, they don't fire pistols; they just shake a paternal finger and speak, and we feel their virility. When the father shakes his finger, it may be that he is defending an outmoded or unjust principle, or a misguided one, but we feel his essential wisdom and there's no whining. The Jew rarely whines. He wails. When a father thunders to a son in a typical Jewish melodrama that he must never forget he is a Jew, it may be that the injunction is too simple and a little remote in its connotations, but the father speaks with the voice of Abraham and of Jacob.

In this as in other things, it would not hurt us to go back to the Yiddish theater for a lesson in dramaturgy. For the strong and wise father who carries drama in his mere presence has practically disappeared from the American stage. Jacob, the grandfather in *Awake and Sing,* and Esdras in *Winterset,* are in the line, but the father has lost stature in Willy Loman, of *Death of a Salesman,* a play notable for its careful suppression of the Jewish tone. In *Life with Father* he becomes a pompous fool and mother a silly spendthrift, and mother becomes another kind of scatterbrain in *The Glass Menagerie.* The father-fool and the silly-mother apparently seem truer images for a society in which it is common to think the young are wiser than the old and cannot realize themselves unless they run away from home.

Another frequent theme in Jewish plays is that of the elder sister who gives up her "place" and the man she loves to her sister. It is a melodramatic situation built on an archaic custom, but it conveys to us some of the pathos and drama of the sister-relation. Where else do we recognize that relation today, and how are we to play the Electra-Orestes situation if we don't understand it? And there is the mother, too, who participates in the action with the ominous knowledge that her elder daughter may never be married—where does this vigorous and passionate mother exist in American drama? Or again: a son or a daughter makes a bad marriage, marries out of Judaism, and it becomes a tragedy for the young and the old and for the Jewish people as well. It is not fashionable on our stage for a mother or a father to be so deeply concerned in the marriage choices of their children, but is this a completely dead issue and can we utterly deny the psychological basis, for good or for bad, of such concern?

In Asch's *God of Vengeance,* a father becomes a procurer so that he may provide his daughter with a rich dowry and a good and respectable life. Even in this shocker the theme so dear to the Jew's heart—sacrifice of parents for children—is basic. Again we may ask whether this theme has no meaning in American life on some level. Is not the question of how much a parent may give to a child before he destroys the child or himself a current one?

On the comic side of the Yiddish style Menasha Skulnik is the best and most accessible example and I think he is offer-

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ing an interesting lesson on Broadway in *The Fifth Season*. Skulnik is the Jew in trouble, but his trouble has become an abstraction and the definition of his style: when he appears on the stage, even before the situation seizes him, his *tsores* are there beside him like a partner in the act, his straight man. He doesn't hope to defeat them. He needs them. Without them, he would have nothing to say. Even success means only more trouble. And a good thing, too: if there could be a world in which trouble did not weigh on Skulnik's shoulders, we would be deprived of the most eloquent shrug ever conceived.

He's not a fool either. He's a *nebachel*, a *shlemiel*. He walks into trouble with the ease of a fool, but he understands his fate and embraces it. It is particularly interesting to see him in this bad play where his style is set off sharply against an example (not the best) of the standard Broadway comic style: Richard Whorf in a typically efficient, rapid-fire, wallop-the-punch-line technique is never funny, never a person. For Skulnik the gag is only secondary. With careful tone and gesture, precise timing and emphasis, he feels the meaning of his situation. His funniest line, "I used to think you were my friend, but now I see you're only my friend," is not spectacular as a gag, but through a process of raising and lowering his arms, his shoulders, his eyebrows, his voice, he rewrites the line and fills the moment with disappointment, resignation, self-effacement. These are his trademarks and the trademarks of the Yiddish comic style. But what is even more interesting is the way he unconsciously rearranges the relationships in the play. Richard Whorf, the governing partner in the garment business and a father in the play, for all his loud voice and at least forty inches of waist is never truly a father. (His wife, incidentally, is again the silly, spendthrift mother.) But Skulnik, by the sheer authority of his style, becomes the real father figure of the piece, while Whorf remains only a petulant boy.

The World of Sholom Aleichem, a small piece of it now playing at the Barbizon-Plaza Theatre, gives us another good opportunity to see some excellent comic Yiddish acting. The stories, translated and adapted for the stage, are hardly more than skits, dramatized jokes, but even in English a good deal of the tone and manner of the folk is preserved, and much of the charm of the Jewish family humor remains. It is again from the family situation that the most affecting moments are extracted. Morris Carnovsky plays a comically inadequate father trying to get his son admitted to a Gentile high school, and achieves a feeling of racial pride and dignity before overwhelming odds that carries him beyond his already established comic resignation. On the other hand as the Presiding Angel in Heaven, in Peretz's *Bontche Schweig*, he plays heavenly authority with a gentle and easy realism that belie his false beard and white robe.

But perhaps the most poignant moment in the program is Howard Da Silva's reminiscence, as Mendel the Bookseller in a sort of *Our Town* narration, of his youthful aspiration to play the fiddle. In deference to his father's wishes he never succumbs to the seductive vice of the fiddle but neither does he succeed in the practical world. He becomes a humorous failure who sells books, and recalls what a wonderful fiddler he might have been. It is another favorite Jewish problem; shall the son go into the father's business or play the fiddle? And it is no less an American one, but I dare say it is far more frequently stated in the radio serials and Class B movies than ever on the American stage.

So there are things the American theater can learn from the Yiddish style, and indeed does now and again, because setting aside the old East European scene and the melodramatic story, the Yiddish theater rests on a still present reality. The story of the Yiddish stage continues unfortunately to be one of disintegration and dispersal, but we can at least observe to some degree its absorption into and its effect upon the American scene. It must mean something that, except for Eugene O'Neill, the outstanding plays of strong families, strong by comparison with *Life with Father*, *I Remember Mama*, and *The Glass Menagerie*, have been written by American Jews—Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman. Jacob in *Awake and Sing* goes on shaking his warning finger at his grandson as does Bonaparte at his son in *Golden Boy*. In Arthur Miller's plays, sons leave home or fall sobbing into their father's arms, fathers

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sacrifice their lives and their dignity to provide for their families. In Lillian Hellman, the family goes on wrangling and eating at each other's hearts, but ultimately presents a formidable and united front to the outside world.

And the Jewish actors, too, have kept something of the Yiddish theater in their bones. Watered down, a good deal obscured, the Yiddish style can still be seen in Paul Muni's Jewish shrug and raised eyebrows; in Edward G. Robinson playing the dominant father of *House of Strangers,* or the criminally sacrificing father of *All My Sons*; in Lee J. Cobb playing the sacrificing provider Willy Loman, or the disappointed Bonaparte of *Golden Boy;* in John Garfield playing the prodigal violinist son in the same play. It is still seldom, however, that we see actors on the American stage who can give us the powerful patriarchal presence of a Maurice Schwartz or the high style of a Joseph Buloff. No doubt by our present standards of realism there is a bit too much grandiloquence and floridity in their style, but our excitement over the raucous, coarse "grand manner" of Judith Anderson, for instance, is a sign that we miss the real thing—and there is more than a little of the real thing in the Yiddish theater.

Even the Jewish comedians have relied heavily on what might almost be called the "family style." Eddie Cantor's Ida and his five daughters served his comedy continuously. George Jessel's most famous and persistent routine is his telephone conversations with his mother. Sam Levenson's entire repertoire is made up of Momma and Poppa and the kids. Milton Berle's favorite offstage character is his mother. And I don't think it's too far-fetched to suggest that the running food jokes, so characteristic of Jewish humor, which are eaten up on the "borscht circuit," have been fed to Broadway in *Borscht Capades* and *Bagels and Yox,* and have become more and more frequent on radio and in musical comedy, are essentially family jokes: food and religious rites remain in the family as identifiably Jewish in a way that other things do not.

The current musical *Wish You Were Here,* based on Arthur Kober's *Having Wonderful Time,* is also worth mentioning for the effect that the Yiddish "family style" produces in a stock American Hollywood-Broadway situation. The original play's undercurrent of social comment on the Catskill Mountains resort as a place for finding husbands, for "mixing and mingling," has been diffused and weakened. The production has become a little shy of its Jewishness. Teddy Stern and Chick Miller, the boy and girl of the piece, stand out unintentionally as Gentiles in the Jewish Camp Karefree (Nitgedaigit). But the basic Jewish orientation remains. In a more purely "American" musical like *Oklahoma,* for instance, the girl is in love with a boy who must first overcome the second man; the second man is ugly, stupid, obviously not worthy of the girl, and never represents a serious threat; he stands in simply to give the girl and boy an opportunity to come together, conflict and part, and then come together again in the end. In *Wish You Were Here* we find the same plot element, but in this case the second man, one Herman Fabricant, is past middle age. Jewish, and in the garment industry, he owns a "Hydromatic-shmatic" Cadillac, and has been provided by the girl's mother as the soundest possible marriage arrangement for her daughter. Not to drop Momma and the second man too hard, we are assured that Herman is a good-natured guy, and anyway Chick is sure to turn out a successful lawyer in spite of his taste for concerts and museums. It may be that the mother's concern over her daughter's marriage is more bourgeois than Jewish, but the point is that the tradition of Yiddish theatrical style makes it easier for Jews to express such a concern convincingly on the stage.

In its purest form, it's a style of inflated realism, the Yiddish, of melodrama and sentimentalism, of laughter and tears. It's not likely to attain to high tragedy or high comedy, for it deals too much with types rather than with characters—types at which the audience may point and experience sentiment rather than real emotion. But neither does the American theater show signs of arriving at high tragedy and comedy, and the Yiddish style represents a value it cannot afford to overlook: the sources of renewed life for the drama are not always —indeed not often—to be found within the accepted boundaries of cultivated taste, but somewhere outside.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

IS AMERICA STILL THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY?

What Recent Studies Show about Social Mobility

WILLIAM PETERSEN

A POPULAR cliché has it that it is harder nowadays for a young man to get ahead in this country than it was, say, fifty or seventy-five years ago. Both the public and social scientists tend to agree that opportunities for advancement are now more limited, that class lines have become more rigid, that what sociologists term "social mobility" has been slowing down, that our society is becoming frozen. This consensus is remarkable in that it lacks the support of any really convincing facts. If anyone has questioned it—and hardly anyone has since the depression—this very lack of relevant data has permitted scholars and laymen to shrug the questioner off and continue holding on to their assumption that the Horatio Alger pattern is now obsolete.

Quite suddenly, the past two years have produced some authoritative material on the true situation. Only since then have the first reliable studies of social mobility in the United States been made, and these studies, whatever their faults and limitations, now make available for the first time data on which to base a serious judgment as to how fluid the American class structure is.

THERE are two rather different ways in which you can study social mobility: you can compare the occupations of sons with those of their fathers, and see whether they are lower or higher on the social scale; or you can trace the movements of individuals through their various occupations, and determine whether they have been going up or down on that scale.* Let us begin with the first.

WILLIAM PETERSEN here reports on some of the most important studies that have been published by American sociologists in recent years, measuring the extent of American social mobility—the chances in our system for the individual to "rise out of his class" in income, occupation, and status. These studies seriously challenge convictions that have been enshrined in textbooks and have served as the basis for extensive analyses of American society, and they challenge the clichés of daily conversation as well. Mr. Petersen has been a student of economics and sociology at Columbia University, the New School for Social Research in New York, the Sorbonne, and the University of Amsterdam. He has taught at Columbia University and Smith College and is now assistant professor of sociology at the University of California. He was born in Jersey City in 1912.

*In almost all the studies that we mention, social mobility is defined in terms of the movement from one occupational group to another. Of course, the kind of work a man does is not the only factor determining his social class; his income, his prestige, and his authority are also very important. But social scientists agree that occupation is the best index of class, for two reasons. It is very much more definite than other indices: a man is much more likely to be able to tell us, for example, that his father was a carpenter than what his father's status and standard of life were. Secondly, while all the factors that define a man's station in life interact, in most cases his occupation is the most important one; the work he does is more likely to affect his income or status than vice versa.

But it is well to be aware of some of the shortcomings of the occupational index. First of all, a good deal of mobility is possible *within* a single occupation, as when a physician rises from interne to small-town doctor to metropolitan specialist, or a businessman who begins with a single establishment develops it into a chain. Secondly, occupational groups are usually rather heterogene-

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The most important of these studies was conducted by Natalie Rogoff, and is about to appear in book form (*Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois). Applications for marriage licenses in Marion County, Indiana, which includes the city of Indianapolis and its suburbs, ask the prospective groom to give his father's as well as his own occupation, and this made an invaluable mine of data on social mobility available. Miss Rogoff analyzed all the Marion County marriage licenses for each of two periods, 1905-12 and 1938-41 (there were about 10,000 in each period), and could thus compare mobility before the First World War with that just before the Second World War. By a special device she also distinguished between two types of mobility—that resulting from changes in occupational structure (for example, if there is an increase in the percentage of white-collar positions and a decrease in the percentage of farm jobs one may expect fewer sons than fathers to be farmers, and more to be white-collar workers); and that resulting from the openness of opportunity in general. From her study, therefore, we can see whether there has been more or less social mobility than can be accounted for by changes in the country's occupational structure.

Apart from these changes—in themselves enormous, and leading to a decline in the number of low-status occupations and an increase in the number of high-status occupations—Rogoff found overall social mobility to be essentially *the same in 1940 as it was in 1910*. There were some differences, however, as regards individual occupational groups; in particular, mobility into the "professionals," the highest group, had increased by about a quarter over the thirty-year period (that is to say, apart from the increase in professional positions, the number of sons in the professions who did not have fathers in the professions increased by one-quarter). In both periods, the rate of mobility was higher between white-collar occupational groups, as well as between manual groups, than between the two broad classes. The major barrier to both upward and downward mobility was found to lie between skilled workers and lower white-collar employees, between manual jobs and non-manual positions, between "hand" and "head" work.

THE second study of social mobility over more than one generation was made in quite a different kind of community—Oakland, an industrial town across the bay from San Francisco—by Seymour M. Lipset, Reinhard Bendix, and F. Theodore Malm.* They interviewed the principal wage-earner in a random sample of 955 Oakland households (excluding the very highest and lowest socio-economic neighborhoods). Analysis was concentrated on a comparison of the sons of fathers who had spent most of their lives as manual workers with the sons of fathers who had spent most of their lives in non-manual work.

The results were startling. Of the sons of fathers who had spent most of their lives as manual workers, 47 per cent were working in non-manual occupations, as compared with 68 per cent of the sons of fathers who had spent most of their lives in non-manual occupations. The 21 per cent difference between these two figures measures the sum of all the obstacles, hereditary or cultural, that face the working-class boy who tries to cross the widest gap in the American class structure. In addition, almost half the sons of fathers who had done mostly manual work, and who at the time of this study were themselves doing manual work, had spent some parts of their careers in non-manual occupations.

These two studies are based on only two American communities, but their general conclusions are supported by two nationwide surveys of the occupations of sons and fathers. One of these surveys was made by the Office of Public Opinion Research of Princeton University in 1945, the other by the National Opinion Research Center in 1947. According to both these studies, about a third of the respondents were in the same occupational group as their fathers; somewhat more than a third were in a higher group; and a bit less than a third in a lower group. This rather high rate of *downward* mobility was in part a reflection of the fact that many of the respondents were still quite young, and some could be expected to rise later to a higher group.

ous: "own business" ranges from push-cart peddlers to partnerships large enough to compete with major corporations; "farm" from migrant pickers to ranch-owners; and similarly for other groups.

*"Social Mobility and Occupational Career Patterns: I. Stability of Jobholding" and "II. Social Mobility," in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 57 (January 1952 and March 1952 respectively).

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WHAT about social mobility as measured within an individual's occupational career, rather than in relation to his father's occupation? The Oakland survey is the only major study of this kind of mobility, and while this fast-growing city (its population increased by more than a quarter between 1940 and 1950) cannot be taken as typical of the country as a whole, it does offer an index to the degree of social mobility in places where the American economy is expanding most rapidly.

When the Oakland respondents were classified according to the occupational groups (in addition to their present ones) in which they had worked, the data showed a variety of job experience that the authors term "staggering." A man who had begun in one occupational group and had remained there, without ever holding a job in another, was definitely atypical. On the other hand, most of this mobility was limited in range. Thus those who now had manual jobs had spent 80 per cent of their working careers in the manual class, and those now holding non-manual positions had spent 75 per cent of their careers in the non-manual class. Since in agreement with Rogoff the authors stress that the gap between manual and non-manual work is the widest in the American class structure, the converse of these figures is also relevant: manual workers had spent one-fifth of their occupational careers in non-manual positions, and white-collar workers one-quarter of theirs in manual jobs. Or, even more startling, 47 per cent of the manual workers had done white-collar work at some time, and 62 per cent of the white-collar workers had worked with their hands at some time.

Lipset and Bendix made a special analysis of the manner in which the gap between manual and non-manual work was crossed. Most workers who moved into the white-collar class had either set up their own small businesses or got low-status jobs, most often as salesmen. One reason for this is obvious: small business and selling are the two activities in which a person with a limited education tends to be least handicapped. More generally, education is one of the most important of the factors that shape the seemingly chaotic picture of social mobility. Thus, farmers' sons migrating to town are typically handicapped by their inferior schooling and tend to enter the urban labor market at or near the bottom. At the other extreme, professionals typically require a long period of rather specialized education and apprenticeship. Nevertheless, Rogoff's study showed that mobility into the professional group has increased fastest over the past generation; and virtually all professionals, according to Lipset and Bendix, have spent part of their working careers in other occupations, in many cases probably while they were attending school.

ALL these studies assume that change in occupation is an index to social mobility but, as we have pointed out, this is only an approximate measure. Yet if we use income as the index, the results turn out the same. It is generally recognized that the national income of the United States has risen and is continuing to rise, with per capita income regularly increasing at a well-nigh incredible rate of over 2 per cent annually. It has been repeatedly stated, however, that, while average income has risen, this trend has been largely countered by one toward polarization, which drains the middle-income group off into the groups above and below it. "The rich get richer, and the poor poorer." So far as the long-term perspective is concerned, this view can be founded on nothing but ideological preconceptions, for it has no data to support it.

After a diligent search, I was able to find only one study of income distribution that went back into the 19th century. In this unique work, the economist Rufus Tucker ("The Distribution of Income among Income Taxpayers in the United States, 1863-1935," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 52, August 1938) used government statistics on income-tax payments, which are available, with interruptions, from 1863 on. He converted the designated incomes into 1929 dollars, and calculated the percentage of the population that fell into various income groups in each of the years for which data were available. While the method itself was too rough to delineate any but gross differences, Tucker's general conclusions seem to be well based:

"Income is now [1935] much less concentrated in the United States than it was during and just after the Civil War. Although very wealthy persons are more numerous now than then, the number of persons of moderate incomes has increased more than the number of very wealthy persons, [and] the average purchasing power of wage-earners has increased greatly. . . . The members of the upper-income classes are a constantly shifting lot. The income-

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tax statistics as they stand give very little support to the idea of a hereditary plutocracy. . . . It is very difficult to maintain fortunes intact."

For the more recent period the best impression of income distribution can be got from a book by Simon Kuznets published only several months ago: *Shares of Upper Income Groups in Income and Savings* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1953). For the greater part of his professional career Simon Kuznets has been directing the National Bureau of Economic Research's analysis of American national income, and his findings have been published in several scores of volumes. In this latest book he traces the percentage of the country's income that went, respectively, to the top 1 per cent and the top 5 per cent. The top 1 per cent were, for example, a family of three with an income of more than $6,300 in 1933, or $12,600 in 1929, or $16,800 in 1946, while the minimum income of the top 5 per cent ranged from $1,250 in 1933 to $2,300 in 1946. During the period between the First World War and the end of the depression, the proportion of the total income that these upper groups received varied little from year to year, only to fall sharply in the most recent period:

	Top 1%	*Top 5%*
Average, 1919-1938	13%	25%
Average, 1947-1948	8.5%	18%

"The recent decline in upper group shares," Kuznets writes, "which for its magnitude and persistence is unmatched in the record, obviously has various causes. The most prominent are the reduction of unemployment and the marked increase in total income flowing to lower income groups (particularly farmers and wage earners); shifts in the saving and investment habits of upper income groups which may have curtailed their chances of getting large receipts from successful venture capital and equity investments; lower interest rates; and steeper income taxes. . . ."

In summary, it can be said that social mobility, whether measured from one generation to the next or within the job careers of individuals, whether by occupation or income, is high. Its range, however, tends to be limited: that is, farmers may become workmen; workers may rise to a higher level of skill or become small businessmen or lower white-collar employees; lower employees may rise to executive positions; and professional positions tend to be filled from upper white-collar or business groups. Many of the shifts are temporary, and there is a smaller but nonetheless significant rate of downward mobility. These tendencies, finally, while definite enough to fix a pattern, also encompass many individual exceptions.

WHAT then is the basis for the notion, still generally held in learned as well as lay circles, that it is harder to get ahead than it was a generation ago?

Two scholarly myths have played an enormous role in maintaining this illusion. The first is that of "the closing of the American frontier." A generation ago, Frederick Jackson Turner stated his famous thesis that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development." A large number of his students, teaching American history in colleges throughout the country, have made of this assertion a dogma. As Frederic L. Paxson, a leading disciple, put it, "The frontier hypothesis presents the most attractive single explanation of the distinctive trends of American history." Even if it were the most attractive *single* explanation, it would still have the faults of any monolithic theory, and no more than any other can it encompass in one narrow concept the complexity of American society. In an oft-quoted passage, the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 declared that the frontier "cannot any longer have a place in the census reports." If this is what is meant by the closing of the frontier, it has not had a markedly adverse effect on the American economy, which has grown fastest since 1890. And if this is not what is meant, then the phrase becomes—what it does become in many discussions—hardly more than a metaphor, convenient because of its very vagueness.

Often the phrase "the closing of the frontier" has been a way of joining Turner's monolithism to that of Marx. Certainly, this is not the occasion to discuss the adequacy of the Marxist theory of capitalist development; but the recurrent issue of "American exceptionalism," as it is termed in Comintern jargon, would indicate that Marxism suffered its greatest reverse in the attempt made to apply it to America. Leading Russian theorists from Lenin to Voznesensky, American Communists from Jay Lovestone to Earl Browder, have not been sure that the breakdown of capitalism was proceeding according to schedule in the United States.

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A century after the *Communist Manifesto* was written many of its dire prophecies have been fulfilled—in Europe; but the center of world capitalism continues to grow in wealth and strength. In Communist terms, the United States is, indeed, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." The rate of social mobility slowed down appreciably during the great depression of the 1930's, and a definitive evaluation of current trends would have to be based on some theory of economic development. But those who think some variant of Marxian theory will serve, and who consequently believe that another depression is just around the corner, seem to me to show a faith as touching—and unwarranted—as ex-President Hoover's.

IF NEITHER "the closing of the frontier" nor "the maturity of American capitalism" was relevant to social mobility, there were other structural changes in American society that were. In a stimulating article written in 1942,* the sociologist Elbridge Sibley presented the hypothesis that social mobility in the past had depended on two fundamental population trends. Typically, the average family size in the upper classes had been small, creating a social vacuum that the more numerous sons of the lower classes rushed in to fill. More recently, this class difference in fertility has become smaller, for now the average family size of the upper classes has increased and that of the lower classes has decreased. Thus when professional or executive posts, say, are vacated by retirement or death, they can be filled by sons or nephews of the same social class. Secondly, the rapid upward mobility of the past had been in large part a consequence of immigration. Most of the million immigrants who came to this country yearly from 1900 to 1914 were peasants who spoke little or no English. Inevitably, they entered the American labor market at the bottom, and pushed native-born workers up at least one rung. But immigration is now restricted to a fraction of its pre-1914 numbers, and American society can no longer depend on this semi-automatic process to insure the continuance of its open-class structure. Moreover, Sibley might have added, some of the more recent immigrants, who came for political rather than economic reasons, have been urban professionals and other white-collar types who enter the labor market above its midpoint. Before 1914, in summary, both the differential fertility and the large immigration favored a high rate of upward mobility, but since then both of these underlying demographic trends have changed markedly.

Why, then, has the rate of mobility not fallen, contrary to Sibley's expectations? Very tentatively, four reasons can be suggested to explain this:

(1) The development of the economy continues to favor upward mobility. Sibley noted that between 1870 and 1930 an estimated nine million workers had shifted from manual to white-collar work; but that since 1930 technical progress had resulted in technological unemployment. His assumption, however, that the depression set a permanent downward trend has not proved to be correct.*

(2) Since the immigration law was passed in the 1920's, there seems to have been a compensatory increase in the immigration of unskilled laborers from the Western Hemisphere —French Canadians, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. While the total number has never approached the previous average of a million a year, it has been a significant factor for certain regions.

(3) Internal migration may serve some of the same functions as the former large overseas immigration. According to Census Bureau statistics, during the period 1934-39, 13.1 per cent of the population fourteen years and over moved from the county in which they were living; during the fiscal year 1940-1941, 20.8 per cent of the total population, including children, moved to another county; and for the fiscal year 1948-1949, this figure was about 6 per cent. True, these migrants do not typically take the lowest jobs as the pre-1914 immi-

*Elbridge Sibley, "Some Demographic Clues to Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 7, June 1942.

*Indeed, from 1910 to 1953 the proportion of the labor force employed in white-collar occupations has almost doubled, increasing from 21 per cent in 1910 to 39 per cent in 1953, and the rate of increase has been highest in the last decade. The increase, moreover, was approximately the same in each of the occupational groups within the white-collar class, professional and executive as well as clerical. And within the working class, the major trend has been a marked decrease in the proportion of unskilled, from 15 per cent in 1910 to 6 per cent in 1953 (though this may be the consequence partly of changes in census classification). Farmers and farm workers have fallen from more than half of those occupied in 1870 to less than a tenth today.

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grants used to do; the Oakland study, for example, showed a high correlation between geographical movement and upward mobility. But they do upset the social structure of the communities into which they move, as well as affecting that of the communities they leave.

(4) It may be that the continued movement of women into the labor force is a factor in promoting social mobility. While women take many of the white-collar jobs that become available, and thus absorb a portion of the social mobility implicit in the structural change of the economy, within any occupational group they are usually bunched at the bottom, thus possibly helping the men in that group to rise.

HOWEVER, it is not illusion or error alone that supports the idea that the rate of social mobility has declined. It does have a certain limited validity. Even today, with full employment, certain of the once typical paths up the social scale are much more difficult to climb. In particular, with the growing complexity of large industry, more and more firms have filled openings in the lower managerial ranks with graduates of engineering schools rather than by promoting skilled workers. But, while education has become the major barrier to upward social mobility, it has also become so widely distributed that it acts as a barrier through which more and more people can pass.

Over the past sixty years, the proportion of the population aged fourteen to seventeen years that was enrolled in secondary school has increased:

1890	7%
1910	15%
1930	51%
1950	84%

Thus, in half a century, the high school has changed from a preparatory school for a small elite to something almost as universally attended in this country as elementary school. Over the same period college enrollment has grown even faster, with college graduates increasing steadily from 9,371 in 1870 to 432,058 in 1950. At the present time, in proportion to the population of the two countries, there are as many college *teachers* in the United States as there are college *students* in Britain.

But the person who does not get on this educational bandwagon young is excluded from the highest positions pretty effectively: one may become a salesman or a small proprietor, as we have seen, but is not likely to go higher. And the chances of getting this valuable higher education are still much smaller for the children of workers or farmers than for the children of white-collar workers. A study in New York State showed that in 1940 whether high school graduates went on to college depended in part on their grades, but also on their fathers' incomes. The proportion of the best students that entered college varied from 41 per cent for the lowest income group to almost double that for the highest income group.

Family Income

Scholastic Standing	Less than $2,500	$2,500 to $4,999	$5,000 to $8,999	$9,000 and over
Highest quarter	41%	41%	60%	76%
Second quarter	19%	26%	27%	56%
Lower half	11%	13%	27%	44%

This table indicates two things: that a young person's class has a definite influence on whether or not he attends college, but does not decide it. *Fully* four-tenths of those in the highest scholastic group and lowest income group went on to college in 1940, and ***only*** four-tenths of those in the lowest scholastic group and highest income group.

WHENEVER a conclusion is based on isolated facts torn from their social context, we do well to suspect that the choice of these facts was not haphazard but in line with some prejudice or ideology. In this case, two ideologies that seem to have little in common—nostalgic Americanism and Marxism—have cooperated to create and maintain "enlightened" illusions about the American class structure.

The prime representative of the first school is the anthropologist William Lloyd Warner. He began with a survey in Newburyport, Massachusetts, reported at length in the "Yankee City" series of books, and he and his disciples have carried out dozens of similar surveys throughout the country. These studies can be criticized on several grounds, but only one of these is relevant here. Warner made a virtue of the fact that he started his study without a conscious theoretical framework—without "distorting preconceptions," as the phrase goes. He went to Newburyport, looked around, and "discovered" class there; and the clear implication in all of the works of this school is that

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this is a new phenomenon to be viewed against the golden backdrop of America's heroic classless past. For example, in a book about "Jonesville," a small Midwestern town he has studied, he writes:

"The workers' 'stairway to the stars' in Jonesville and America is no longer an open highway. Climbing step by step to bigger and better jobs for most workers and their sons is a story of the past. . . . The Lincoln myth and the American dream of striving to win and getting to the top do not fit the mill worker. To start today in youth as a mill worker in the Jonesvilles of America is usually to end there in old age."* When present reality is contrasted with a stairway to the stars, an open highway, the Lincoln myth, the American Dream, is it any wonder that these analysts find it a bit grubby?

The vinegary review that C. Wright Mills wrote of one of Warner's earlier books achieved a certain fame in sociological circles, if only because of its contrast with the usually staid language of the learned journals. And yet Mills's own book, *White Collar,* is a perfect example of what might be called the Warner method of analysis. The drab picture he paints of the *"lumpen* bourgeoisie" is made up in equal parts of carefully selected statistics, flamboyant prose, and American Dream background music. According to Mills's analysis, the independent farmer, for example, continues to exist only by grace of government largess, and he contrasts this—not with the railroads that grew fat on public lands, nor with the manufacturers who pushed tariff bills through Congress, nor with 19th-century farmers who took their largess in the form of cheap or free land—but with some fanciful image of a free-enterpriser who disdained any proffer of federal assistance and haughtily refused to manipulate state legislatures. Or: the independent storekeeper is under pressure from the chains and must work hard and long hours; but the precise working conditions of the crackerbox philosopher who kept a general store in the country a generation ago are left vague. As social scientists of opposed schools, Warner and Mills have cooperated in proving in this matter that reality and ideology are not in accord. If there is a difference between them, it may be that Warner is naive and that Mills hopes that his readers are.

*W. Lloyd Warner et al., *Democracy in Jonesville: A Study in Quality and Inequality* (Harper, 1949).

As so often in social science, the difficulty in the case of social mobility is that we have no scale against which to measure our findings. Once we know that social mobility exists at a certain rate, how can we say whether it is "high" or "low" or whatever, unless we are able to say that it is "high" or "low" with respect to something else? As the Lipset-Bendix-Malm article puts it, "We are unable to interpret a finding according to which 75 per cent of the manual workers have always done manual labor, while 25 per cent have also had jobs in the non-manual occupations. Such evidence is evidence neither for rigidity (75%) nor for mobility (25%), since we lack the comparative data necessary to make such assertions meaningful." Lacking such a scale, most analysts, either explicitly or by implication, have measured the social mobility they found against the absolute of "classless society," as found either in the mythical American past or in the utopian Marxian future. No concept in the study of society is so confused and abused as the "classless society."

Taken literally, a "classless society" is a contradiction in terms. In all of the dozen variants of the definition of "society," the main element is always a structured group; and one of the main planes of this structure is determined by the division of labor. What, then, is "classless society" in an industrialized country? Neither Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program,* Lenin's *State and Revolution,* nor Bukharin's *Historical Materialism* gives us much enlightenment. Lenin tells us that the term means that "there is no difference between the members of society in their relation to the social means of production," or, in other words, that "classless society" signifies no more than the abolition of private property. Bukharin writes that it is "a question that has been but little discussed in Marxian literature," and he himself disposes of it in some three pages, which form the most detailed exposition of the idea that I know of in Marxist literature. Classes, he tells us, developed out of the division of labor, and from the differentiation resulting from technically necessary organizational functions. Why then will the abolition of private property lead to the disappearance of classes? Why is Robert Michels not correct when he says that socialists may be victorious, but not socialism?

"An example will show Michels' error," writes Bukharin. "When the bourgeoisie is in power, it is by reason of the power—as we know

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—not of all the members of the class, but of its leaders. Yet it is evident that this condition does not result in a class stratification *within* the bourgeoisie. The landlords in Russia ruled [through] their high officials . . . but this stratum did not set itself up as a class against the other landlords. The reason was that these other landlords did not have a lower standard of living than that of the former; furthermore, their cultural level was about the same, on the whole, and the rulers were constantly recruited from this class. . . .

"[During] the *transition period* from capitalism to socialism, i.e., the period of the proletarian dictatorship . . . there will inevitably result a *tendency* to 'degeneration,' i.e., the excretion of a leading stratum in the form of a class-germ. This tendency will be retarded by two opposing tendencies: first, by the growth of the productive forces; second, by the abolition of the *educational monopoly*. . . . The outcome of the struggle will depend on which tendencies turn out to be the stronger."

Thus, a "classless society" apparently means not a society without classes but rather one in which the class differences in income and culture are "on the whole" not very great. It is a society in which education is not a class monopoly, so that positions in the ruling "stratum" become open to all persons of competence. Moreover, the development of the economy is a decisive factor, for only with the sharply increased production that full industrialization affords will general cultural democratization be possible. In short, once "classless society" in its Marxian sense becomes more concrete than a mere slogan, it proves to be not an absolute against which to measure social mobility but actually something very like present-day American society.

On analysis, the "classless society" of the mythical American past turns out to be one, simply, in which social mobility was high. Once we attempt to analyze the slogan of the "American Dream," once we try to get behind the "tradition"—as Robert Lynd put it in his *Middletown in Transition*—that any "enterprising man with an idea and a shoestring of capital" could start his own business, we find a society with a quite definite class structure. Social mobility in the United States during the 19th century was very high compared with that in Europe, but whether it was higher than in present-day America no one can really say. So much is true: since the whole economy was different, the routes to higher status were not the same, but probably no greater proportion of the population achieved such status, nor was it easier to achieve.

Without going into details, it is necessary furthermore to indicate the long-term shift in class power that has taken place. Property qualifications for voting, present in twelve of the original thirteen states and persisting until well into the 19th century, have disappeared. The abolition of slavery was followed, but only after the First World War, by a painfully slow but real improvement in the Negro's status. Industrial laws replaced the common law under which employer-worker relations had been regulated by master-servant norms. The trade union movement grew to its present impressive size and strength and, perhaps even more important, its authority was made legitimate to the point where most middle-class persons recognize the right of the trade union movement to function as a class organization. The urban concentration of wealth has been counterbalanced by various "artificial" measures designed to raise the farmers' standard of living. The income tax has become a permanent feature of American society.

No matter how we try to analyze the long-term trend in social mobility—whether we look at the distribution of occupations, income, education, wealth or power—the sparse data we do have would indicate that the class structure has become more fluid rather than rigid.

IN ANY society, the jobs to be done vary in degree of pleasantness, difficulty, and importance. To get the work done requires, first of all, a differentiation of authority; and jobs that are especially important and those requiring especially long training tend to be rewarded with a higher amount of material goods or by symbolic marks of prestige. In short, class differentiation serves a function. That is not to say, of course, that the class structure of any particular society serves its function perfectly, or even well. The point is rather that the class division in every society of which we have any knowledge exists not only because of the psychological differences among humans but because of the social function that class serves. In the abstract, one can conceive of other social institutions that might serve the same function —for example, a feeling of identity with the group intense enough to motivate all to work without supervision and to motivate some persons to do the less pleasant or more difficult

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work without special reward. On the basis of efficiency and other values, it is possible to choose (still in the abstract) between class division and some such alternative—bearing in mind, however, that the function class division serves is important and that there is no historical precedent for its complete replacement by other institutions.

Class structures may be compared by ranging them along a continuum from the caste society, in which the family a person is born into completely determines his life's chances, to the open-class society, in which birth has *no* effect on the individual's class and status. Neither of these ideal types has ever existed in pure form. In particular, so long as the family as we know it persists, each person's attitudes and aptitudes will continue to be formed in large part by his parents. Thus, it is completely logical that strongly egalitarian societies, such as the Soviet Union immediately after 1917, or Israeli *kibbutzim,* have tended to replace the family by public crèches. Such societies have also reacted against the social division of labor, the second principal determinant of class position. Sometimes, as in the various utopian communities of 19th-century America or, again, in the *kibbutzim,* the group has concentrated on agriculture and left it to the profane world outside to provide industrial products. Sometimes, though more in theory than in practice, the circulation of the entire labor force among the various occupations has been proclaimed. Thus, Lenin declared that "every cook" should become an administrator; and in the society that Edward Bellamy described in *Looking Backward* all young men and women were drafted for a period into a civilian service corps to which such menial tasks as waiting on tables were assigned.

Those who have advocated scrapping fundamental institutions have seldom indicated that their programs were based on a choice between competing values. The influence of the family is not wholly bad, by any criterion. And in our complex society a professional, for example, is likely to be thirty years old before he finishes his special schooling, his apprenticeship as interne or law clerk, and his starting practice. From the point of view of social efficiency, it is disadvantageous to force such a man to postpone his productive life, as such writers as Bellamy suggest, for, say, another two years, or to shift him to a different occupation once he has learned his own.

A very high rate of social mobility may have harmful consequences, of which we can conveniently distinguish three kinds.

First, even in a rapidly growing economy, a high rate of upward mobility entails some downward mobility; and the consequent *nouveaux pauvres* are a liability in any social system. Typically, declassed people will seek to retain their status by irrational means: it is they who foster race hatred, who give demagogues their first support, who form the vanguard of totalitarian parties. So long as their number is relatively small they constitute a nuisance that can be controlled; but any social program that leads to an appreciable increase in declassed *"lumpen"* ought to include measures to reabsorb them into the social fabric as quickly as possible.

Secondly, a class system that fosters a very wide diffusion of cultural values may well sacrifice some of these values. While a very much higher percentage of young people attend college in the United States than in Britain—as we have noted in our discussion of education—the level of education at American colleges is, on the whole, decidedly lower. Just recently, for example, Dr. Minard Stout, president of the University of Nevada, has advocated that it admit any graduate of a Nevada high school, regardless of his academic rating or the kind of courses he had taken in high school. Opening the doors that wide is a first step toward closing them altogether.

Thirdly, rapid social mobility often results in personal maladjustment, if not actual neurosis. This is true both for those who try to climb up the social scale and fail, and for those who succeed. Middle-class Americans are not nearly as happy as their fantastically high standard of living would seem to warrant, for their aspirations are always higher. Instead of enjoying their ample possessions, they strive for higher positions, or gather more gadgets, as new symbols of higher status. The pattern is both to own more and to belittle what one has as hardly comparable with what one *will* have.

The disparity between boundless aspirations and the opportunities to fulfill them undoubtedly does much to create the restlessness typical of American civilization. In a more rigidly stratified society people get a sense of security from "knowing their place," but Americans have no place that endures from one generation to another, or even from year to year. They push upward, and if one avenue fails them they

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seek another. The result is a very active economy, full of ingenious new ideas and products and services such as were never dreamt of in any other society. On the other hand, criminologists agree that a fundamental cause of juvenile delinquency and crime is that the equal opportunities that slum children learn to expect as their right are not really given them. If this theory is correct, then the "cause" of the relatively high crime rate may not be so much the American slums, which are not worse on the whole than those in other countries, but the promissory note in the American democratic credo, inevitably unpayable to so many.

And there is also a price to be paid by the successful. Even if a person is able to climb the social ladder so fast that he catches up with his aspirations, this does not mean that in general he is content. For changing one's class means changing one's way of life. The son of a worker who becomes a lawyer has only begun the move that the shift in occupation implies. To complete it, he must forsake one set of friends and find another, forget pinochle and bowling and learn bridge and skiing, leave the Baptists and join the Episcopalians, and so on. He is of course gratified by his success, but he may feel too anxious to be very happy. He may become a prime example of that modern species, the marginal man, on the edge of several groups without belonging to any. The standards that he learned as a child are not those he is trying to learn now, and he may suffer from what sociologists term *anomie*—literally, normlessness; more generally, an inability to choose amid the confusion of conflicting standards. *Anomie,* a sense of not belonging, is typical of highly mobile societies; for in rigidly structured societies, by definition, a man knows where his place is and what behavior is expected of him.

THE confusions frequently to be found in discussions of the American class system derive in part from the fact that they are conducted against the background of an egregious paradox: the United States, that arch representative of world capitalism, is becoming a socialist society, insofar as that term has any concrete meaning.

The American economy is no longer predominantly a laissez-faire one. Competitive production has been supplanted in crucial areas by controlled and subsidized production, especially for military uses. The increasing role of war production has speeded up long-range structural changes, and has markedly increased the role of government in the whole economy. The new principle is to grant, through government action, profits to those socially desirable enterprises that cannot obtain them in the open market—for example, defense items and agriculture. On the other hand, some of the idyllic virtues of the laissez-faire system have been retained, for it is still remarkably easy to set up a small business. The mortality rate among such small enterprises is indeed high, as Mills, and Lipset and Bendix, and others point out, but is it higher than it used to be? And, more important, is it higher than it ought to be? It is precisely the virtue of such a fluid system that it provides for a good deal of trial-and-error experiment, and to complain that a man starting his business has no guarantee of success is to demand the best of all possible worlds.

The American economy is mixed, but American culture is, in effect, socialist. It is based on the same essential factors—the enormous industrial production, the high and widely distributed income, the general distribution of equalitarian cultural values—that any socialist culture would rest on. The very high proportion of low-grade cultural products is related to the large number of people with purchasing power but without tradition—that is, to the fact that the society is highly mobile. That this low-grade culture is distributed commercially is true, but not as important as many have made it. The American economy can meet any reasonable demand, and in other types of consumers' products, where the demand has been for quality goods, the quality of production has been high.

The social structure, finally, is what Bukharin called a "classless society." Not indeed what orthodox Marxists look for in the ultimate phase of "communism" but what they expect during the transitional period of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Differences in the income and culture of the entire population of the United States are great, but these differences tend to be less "on the whole" than in any advanced society we know of. Moreover, the two forces that will prevent, in Bukharin's terms, the United States from degenerating into a class society—"the growth of the productive forces" and "the abolition of the education monopoly"—are very much in evidence. But the clearest criterion is the rate of social mobility—the fact that the highest "stratum" is regularly recruited from the rest of the society.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

Israel and Oriental Culture

To the Editor of Commentary:

In Mr. Aleph Sherman's review of my recent book *Israel Between East and West* (August 1953), a false picture of the attitude of Israeli social scientists towards Middle Eastern culture and the cultural configuration of modern Israel serves as a basis for misleading statements about my book and for an unwarranted personal attack on me. . . .

Mr. Sherman points out that I "did not have the time to do serious field work during . . . two brief visits to Israel since 1947," taking the information concerning my two visits from the preface of my book. But he carefully omits to mention that from 1933 to 1947 I resided continuously in Palestine . . . a fact which is also mentioned in the preface. In view of this it was interesting for me to note in the March 1953 issue of Commentary that Mr. Sherman himself arrived in Israel only in the early part of 1952!

Mr. Sherman's review reveals a rather superficial perusal of my text. He consistently fails to distinguish between my own statements and those quoted by me from other authors. For example . . . he says: "Professor Patai contrasts what he calls the 'esthetic and emotionally immediate religious values to which the East has primarily devoted its attention' with the 'scientific, doctrinal, and pragmatic values upon which the West has concentrated.'" Had he read my page 335 more attentively, he would have found the following: "More systematically and more comprehensively than others, F. S. C. Northrop [in *The Meeting of East and West*] found that the fundamental problem of merging the East with the West with safe and positive results involves the task of relating the esthetic and the emotionally immediate religious values, to which the East has primarily devoted its attention, to the scientific, doctrinal and pragmatic values upon which the West has concentrated." . . .

Similarly, when stating that "Professor Patai considers steam power as one of the main complexes . . . in Western civilization," he overlooks the fact that the entire section entitled "The Western Pattern" . . . is a summary of an analysis made by the anthropologist O. W. Junek, as stated by me on page 32. . . . It would certainly seem that Mr. Sherman's quarrel is not only with me but with a large body of distinguished social scientists.

Mr. Sherman's own views on Eastern and Western cultures are, to say the least, surprising. "Now in fact," he says, "Eastern and Western 'cultures' are not anthropologically distinct since they share a common history and philosophy, and began to diverge seriously only a matter of centuries ago. . . ." This categorical statement makes us suspect that Mr. Sherman has no clear idea of what "anthropologically" means and what is understood by a "culture". . . .

Now as to the argument of Mr. Sherman that the great mass of Middle Easterners live a life devoid of any esthetic awareness. Had he found the time during his short stay in Israel to visit an Arab village or the home of a Yemenite Jewish family, or to read any of the several books published in Hebrew about the Arabs of Palestine . . . he would never have made such a blatantly mistaken statement. Mr. Sherman must be ignorant also of the almost ubiquitous manifestations of the influence in Israel of Middle Eastern arts and crafts and music, brought to the country not from the bazaars of "tourist cities" but from remote small towns and villages and distant corners of the Middle East.

This brings us back to the main issue. Mr. Sherman affirms that the consensus of opinion of most Israeli social scientists, as published in particular in the journal *Megamoth,* is that there exists in Israeli Jewry only "one central cohesive culture, with peripheral groups none of which has shown itself capable or desirous of living a self-perpetuating existence; in other words, Oriental culture does not have 'equal validity for its carriers'". . . .

Megamoth, as its subtitle states, is a "Child Welfare Quarterly." Its contributions are generally of a high quality but touch rarely upon the problems to which my book is devoted. However, in 1951 and 1952 several of its articles, in the form of a symposium, dealt with the problems of ethnic differences in Israel. Upon a closer look at these articles, the only ones in *Megamoth* which Mr. Sherman could have in mind, his "most of the studies in ques-

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tion" boils down to one single opinion, that of Mr. Joseph Ben-David, whose statement (on p. 171, vol. III, no. 2, Jan. 1952 of *Megamoth*) bears a striking similarity to the "one culture" idea expressed less cautiously by Mr. Sherman. . . .

THE view against which Mr. Ben-David's single voice militates is held by such authorities as Dr. K. Frankenstein, editor of *Megamoth,* Professor E. Simon, Dr. N. Rottenstreich, and, outside the symposium series, by Professor S. D. Goitein. Dr. Goitein says (*Megamoth,* II, 2, Jan. 1951, p. 152): "First of all, the Yemenite Jew belongs to a completely different variety of human being from the one found today in our country. . . . We belong to the type of the 'homo economicus' who aspires toward a good life . . . while the Yemenite is a 'homo religiosus' who is concerned about the fate of his soul". . . . This seems to be a far cry from the "one cohesive culture" with its "peripheral groups."

Dr. Frankenstein himself says (*Megamoth,* II, 3, April 1951, p. 261): "Nobody denies the existence of ethnic differences. . . . Opinions, however, diverge sharply with regard to the *meaning* of the ethnic differences." . . . He demands that the "receiving group," that is the Western element in Israel, should reach a "self-knowledge and a relativization of the values which in their eyes seem established" (*Megamoth,* III, 4, p. 319), and he says, "We demand, therefore, that the receivers should give up their aggressive belief in the absolute superiority of their own principles of life. . . . We demand that the different should be honored inasmuch as it is different, on the assumption that only such an honoring can save the originality which is contained in it . . ." (ibid., p. 320).

Dr. N. Rottenstreich also finds that in Israel are represented "two essentially different cultural realities": that of the Western, European Jews, "which *enables* the person to develop his individual potential," and that of the Oriental Jews . . . "which does not include in its value-structure the right of realizing this potential" (ibid., p. 327). . . .

Professor Simon asserts (in words resembling the formulations of Enfantin, Julian Huxley, F. S. C. Northrop, and myself) that while the Orientals must learn from "us" several of the positive achievements of Western culture, "we" should learn from them the positive values of their culture, such as "the immediate and intensive character of their religious belief . . . the strength of their affective response to the manifestations of the good, the beautiful, the holy, and the real heartiness of their interpersonal contacts," and should learn to appreciate "the indissoluble tie which exists between their primary approach to man and the world, and their developed artistic expression." Simon warns, just as Northrop and others have, including myself, of the negative manifestations of modern Western culture and of the dangers of imposing it wholesale upon the Oriental segment of the Yishuv which can easily lead to "a complete lack of values" (*Megamoth,* II, 3, April 1951, pp. 278, 282-3; III, 4, July 1952, p. 321. Cf. my own warning against deculturation and Levantinism).

In fine, it must be said that Mr. Sherman simply misrepresents the majority opinion of those participating in the *Megamoth* symposium (or is it possible that his knowledge of Hebrew is not yet equal to the task of precisely grasping the relatively difficult Hebrew scientific style?). . . . The complaints in my book were directed against those students of the adjustment of new immigrants in Israel who, while recognizing the existence of a separate Oriental culture, nevertheless demand their complete assimilation to the Ashkenazi-Western cultural prototype. One part of those participating in the *Megamoth* symposium belonged to this school of thought, while the other approach was represented most characteristically by Frankenstein and Simon. But, I repeat, both schools, with the exception of Mr. Ben-David, agreed that there are two separate, widely differing cultures in Israel. . . .

Fortunately, such extreme views as Mr. Sherman's sweeping denial of the very existence of more than one culture in Israel are very rare. . . .

RAPHAEL PATAI

Forest Hills, New York

Rejoinder

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is characteristic of Professor Patai that he should assume that my only knowledge of the Middle East was acquired in Israel, apparently because I did not introduce irrelevant autobiographical material. . . . In fact, I have spent years in the Middle East and North Africa . . . working *in Arabic,* and I have written and spoken on the problems of the Arabic-speaking world. . . . Having picked fleas off myself from Persia to the Atlas, I remain keen on helping the inhabitants, and understanding them as fellow human beings, without any neo-Spenglerian mystique generated by those dilettantes (Christian or Jewish) who seek in superficial acquaintance with unfamiliar environments and peoples those values they are unable to

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appreciate in their own civilization. It is no accident that what Patai praises as "Oriental" virtues, other reactionaries praise as "medieval" European virtues.

As for the quotations. I pointed out in my review that Professor Patai depended "largely on one or two writers like Northrop and Junek, and on his own experiences and relationships in Jerusalem," then cited the more extreme passages of these writers that he quoted so approvingly as support for his own case. How does this entail misrepresentation? And where did I "tear passages from context"?

How can Dr. Patai claim Dr. Rottenstreich as a supporter? Dr. Rottenstreich in the symposium takes a "stronger" (or as Dr. Frankenstein calls it, more "activist") position than Ben-David, and claims that Israel cannot nor should wish to absorb values from the new immigrants, whom he regards not as a parallel culture but as primitive people. Grol, another of the five contributors, also takes this position, and Ben-David represents, remember, the viewpoint of Dr. Eisenstadt, head of the University sociological department, basing his approach on researches on immigrant adjustment carried out both by the university and Dr. Gutman's Institute for Social Research.

Nor does Professor Frankenstein ask for the recognition of two parallel cultures, or respect for any of the culture traits which Professor Patai posits. Dr. Frankenstein, a pioneer in social and probation work in Israel, is expressly concerned with aiding the adjustment of the backward immigrants from the East to Israeli society as it is. Dr. Frankenstein stresses, and I agree with him, that the identification of the new immigrants, from a primitive cultural background, with the new Israeli culture must be something organic and springing from their inner self, whereas superficial acceptance of our society's symbols together with drastic rejection of their own past can only lead to Levantinism and personality disorders. Dr. Frankenstein emphatically rejects Professor Patai's neo-Spenglerianism as merely confusing a very practical issue.

Professor Patai's quotation from Ernst Simon is out of context here since the latter begins from the standpoint of an Orthodox Jew for whom religious beliefs and practices are an original good in themselves. Right or wrong his standpoint is outside of scientific discussion. . . .

The only "extreme" viewpoint, besides that of the "Toynbee-ists," with their rejection of Western spiritual values, is, paradoxically, precisely that of Mapai and the Histadrut, whom Professor Patai praises so fulsomely; the Histadrut, with its crude and pre-scientific dogmas of Socialist-Zionism, is the worst perpetrator of what Dr. Frankenstein calls the "Prussian approach" towards the primitive immigrants, i.e. the certainty that its aims, *Weltanschauung*, and new personality type are the only worthwhile ones and that everything else is "Galut". . . .

In his book Dr. Patai complained that Israel was handling the problem wrongly and misunderstood its whole basis. But now in his objections to my review, he asserts that virtually the whole of Israeli scientific and political circles agree with him, and that only myself and Ben-David take an opposing view. In that case what has he to lecture Israel about?

In fact, neither he nor others who pay lip service to the equal validity of primitive-Oriental modes of life have any practical conclusions to offer from their theorizing. Professor Simon never draws conclusions in the field of education, for instance. We are to imitate (learn from) and strengthen their "religiosity," but what does this mean in practice? That secularists should begin to take over the Yemenite world outlook? That is obviously impossible. That we should impose clericalism to prevent the newcomers seeing non-religious Jews? That we should accept the literal truth of the Torah? Or just that we should say "how wonderful" and then carry on in the same old way? . . .

And how can we prevent the disintegration of primitive-Oriental modes of life, unless we try to insulate them from too rapid contact with the "Western half," a process which I have always advocated but which Dr. Patai violently rejects as "discrimination". . . .

It would be tempting to put forward a positive solution as well as polemics, but I've used up my allotted space. Suffice it to say that our belief in the possibility of absorbing the new immigrants is based on a belief in the inherent value of every Jew, of every human being, whatever the immediate cultural level of his group, and does not require the creation of imaginary qualities. The present situation demands certain adjustments from the immigrants, as from others, as a price of Israel's survival. We can only wait and see whether as a result, in the long run, two parallel cultures will be formed (later to merge); we do not know enough to forecast.

Aleph Sherman

Jerusalem, Israel

[Lack of space prevents us from publishing other communications on this subject. They may appear in future issues.—Ed.]

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Saving Remnant

THE REDEEMERS: A SAGA OF THE YEARS 1945-1952. By LEO W. SCHWARZ. Farrar, Straus and Young. 385 pp. $4.50.

Reviewed by LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

THE "redeemers" in the title of Mr. Schwarz's book are the liberated Jews in Germany, known to the outside world as "displaced persons," described by themselves as the *Sherit ha-Pleta,* an expression derived from Chronicles I meaning "the remnant that escaped." One might think, at first, that the title is a misnomer; the "redeemers" should perhaps have been the "redeemed." But in the selection of his title Mr. Schwarz has stated the theme of his book and epitomized the historical role of the 200,000 homeless Jews who escaped the destruction of Hitler's war against them.

In telling the story of the Jews in Germany from the time of their liberation until the closing down of the displaced-persons camps, Mr. Schwarz makes explicit the fact that by their very existence and their tremendous clamor for a new life they brought about the creation of the State of Israel. For the Sherit ha-Pleta was the keeper of the world's conscience, the living reminder of the Jewish catastrophe, the rear guard of a ghostly army of 6,000,000 Jews. Burdened with an unwanted sense of guilt for the murdered and provoked by the incredible vitality of people whom even death had not vanquished, the United Nations had indeed little choice when it voted the partition of Palestine.

Mr. Schwarz has elected to tell his story from the point of view of a small group of men, themselves survivors of the death camps, who became leaders of the Sherit ha-Pleta, and it is through their eyes that the dramatic events from 1945 to 1952 are seen. The perspective is true; though the other participants in the drama—the Americans, British, and French as liberators and occupiers, the Germans as the defeated and conquered, the United Nations as welfare and political instrument—played important parts, it was the Jews themselves who took the leading role and who, in the main, fashioned their future destiny.

The author was intimate with the people and events. As director of the Joint Distribution Committee program in the American zone of Germany in 1946-47, he worked closely with the organizations of the Sherit ha-Pleta. As a Jewish writer and scholar, Mr. Schwarz brought to his administrative functions compassion, breadth of vision, and knowledge of East European Jewish life, qualities infrequent among the army, UNRRA, and JDC personnel in Germany. Most important perhaps was his recognition of the dignity of the Sherit ha-Pleta and its right to autonomy in that strange community that developed in the displaced-persons camps in Germany.

The internal life of the Sherit ha-Pleta comprises a good part of the book and Mr. Schwarz vividly describes how the men and women who emerged from the German death camps and the Russian labor camps with nothing more than haunting memories and a will to live organized a society that for seven years existed in a political limbo. Its government, the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, was unique —a representative autonomy functioning under what was practically statutory recognition by the American army; its economy was anomalous, based as it was on UNRRA and JDC relief and only tangentially touching the German economy; its social institutions were a mixture of the old and new—a self-contained, self-administered system of justice reminiscent of medieval Jewish communities and 20th-century schools and kindergartens. The vivid account of the origin and development of these and other institutions and of the Central Committee's constant struggle for broader responsibility and self-government in the regulation of the Sherit ha-Pleta's internal affairs is, however important, only part of the book. For though the Jews in the camps fought daily for

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more freedom and better living conditions, their thoughts were dominated by hopes for the future and the chance to forsake once and for all their limbo existence.

It is with these hopes that the author is most concerned, and the role of the Sherit ha-Pleta in the complex international political situation occupies a substantial part of the book. Every Jew had to find a home, a place where he could once again seek personal happiness and security in a normal society. But few doors were open and even those were not open very wide.

Of the 200,000 liberated Jews, 145,000 (72.5 per cent) eventually went to Palestine (later Israel), 46,000 (23 per cent) to the United States, and 9,000 (4.5 per cent) to Australia, Canada, England, France, Sweden, and other countries. It would be pleasant to think these figures represented emigration to countries of the emigrants' choice, but the very fact that now, at the close of 1953, hundreds of liberated Jews who had emigrated to Israel have returned to the hated German soil merely to remain eligible for American or Canadian visas, is sad proof of the restrictions on immigration faced by the Sherit ha-Pleta.

Mr. Schwarz says, at one point, that only "small but significant groups" among the Sherit ha-Pleta "preferred" to emigrate to the United States, Canada, and Australia. Actually very many—who knows, perhaps most—would have "preferred" to emigrate to the United States and other Western countries. But it was not so much a question of preference as of possibility. Many Jews throughout Germany were registered for emigration to several countries at one time, with a view to accepting the first possibility that appeared. In Bergen-Belsen in the British zone of Germany, a stronghold of political Zionism, a substantial part of the camp population was registered for emigration to Canada, Australia, and whatever countries were at that time accepting immigrants. The arrival in 1947 of the Canadian Tailors' Commission to select a small group of Canadian immigrants touched off near riots in the camp when many hundreds besieged the Commission for applications.

Because there was really no free choice in emigration, the longing of the Sherit ha-Pleta for a home and normality was channeled by its leaders (with an assist from the Jewish Agency for Palestine) into the organized Zionist movement. This longing accounted for the tremendous surge and power of the demands by the Sherit ha-Pleta for free immigration to Palestine. It explains the willingness of people who had already endured too much to undertake illegal journeys covering hundreds of miles that frequently ended, not unexpectedly, in the detention camps on Cyprus. It explains the solid front presented to the various UN investigating commissions. It explains the almost inexplicable fortitude and single-mindedness of the 5,500 Jews of the "Exodus 1947," whose extraordinary story Mr. Schwarz tells from start to finish.

But we should not overlook the fact that the Zionist organizations exercised discipline and pressure to keep many liberated Jews in line with Zionist political demands. There were actually instances of Zionist sabotage of specific immigration projects to countries other than Palestine. (One instance that this reviewer learned of concerned an immigration scheme for a small number of people to go to Holland. Local Zionist opposition in the camp effectively killed the plan; subsequently it was learned that migration to Holland, in this case, had merely been the start of a route for illegal immigration to Palestine.) After the State of Israel was established, the Zionist pressure in the camps for migration to Israel mounted, and Mr. Schwarz himself discusses briefly the unpleasant aspects of the *"giyus"* ("draft"), in which economic sanctions and other methods of coercion were applied to effect greater immigration to Israel.

But this exception to Mr. Schwarz's opinion on the Sherit ha-Pleta's emigration preferences need not seriously affect our admiration for his splendid book. While his own experience contributed to the depth of his understanding, Mr. Schwarz had, in preparing his book, the additional benefit of his incomparable collection of published and unpublished materials on the subject. Most of the documentation is concentrated in sixty-five pages of notes at the end of the book.

One word more. *The Redeemers* has significance beyond the Sherit ha-Pleta. Some of the problems encountered in the camps in Germany were similar to those faced by the United States in administering its unfortunate relocation centers for Japanese Americans during the last war. Alexander H. Leighton's excellent book about the relocation centers, *The Governing of Men* (Princeton University,

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1945), dealing in large measure with the problem of self-government, was little noticed by the welfare teams who worked in the camps in Germany and who might usefully have applied some of the book's findings. Mr. Schwarz's book now may be a useful handbook for administrators working in areas among uprooted or ravaged populations, whether they are concerned with the rehabilitation of Jews or Arab refugees or South Koreans.

The Interfaith Temperament

A PASSAGE IN THE NIGHT. By SHOLEM ASCH. Putnam. 367 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by NORMAN PODHORETZ

A PASSAGE IN THE NIGHT is not a good novel, but it does make all the talk heard for years about Asch's "apostasy" seem mere partisan claptrap. To call *A Passage in the Night* a work of religiosity rather than of religion in no way impugns either Asch's sincerity or his piety, both of which seem to me beyond question. However, it points to a failure of intelligence which is all the more depressing in a mellow, even-tempered, tolerant novel that has the air of flowing from the rich accumulations of an old man's experience.

Actually, *A Passage in the Night* isn't a novel at all, but a fable. That is to say, its main intention is to point a moral. The characters have just enough life to make the plot interesting; all that Asch's purpose requires is that they be plausible. Beyond that, he isn't particularly concerned with them, except as sociological types or psychoanalytic abstractions. The plot is contrived as a vehicle for many reflections on human destiny and the nature of God. Isaac Grossman, a millionaire born of Orthodox parents on the Lower East Side, suffers terrible pangs of conscience in his old age over having stolen $27 from a Pole named Kovalsky when he was a very young man. As a child, Grossman had been taught by his father (a Jew whose faith is almost indistinguishable from Calvinism) that God cannot forgive the sins committed by man against man: only the victim has power to forgive the sinner. To ease his soul, Grossman determines to seek out this Kovalsky and make restitution. His family, afraid of a scandal and convinced that Kovalsky is a creation of Grossman's sick mind, succeeds in having the old man committed to an asylum. In the end, however, Grossman is vindicated—Kovalsky really exists—and with the help of a rabbi's "spiritual psychotherapy," he achieves a new and more comforting relation with God.

This book, then, traces the story of a man who has rejected his father's God, and who learns ultimately that he must find his own God. We are given to understand that a business civilization makes this supremely difficult to do: "You have turned your work into the sum of your spiritual life; your work is your worship and your faith. And you've never felt how enslaved you've become to materialism, the modern Moloch." Asch's businessmen, lawyers, and psychiatrists are so spiritually obtuse that they declare a man insane when his conscience troubles him. So that, on the one hand, we have those who deny the reality of spirit, and on the other, those who claim too much for spirit (the religious fanatics). Isaac Grossman, representing all the tremendous creative energy of the industrial world (he's a great builder), squirms helplessly between the two crushing forces until the folksy home theologian, Moses Silverstein, and the non-sectarian spiritual-guidance counsellor Rabbi Zimmerman (who finds it hard to draw a line between the job of a psychoanalyst and the job of a rabbi) join forces to lead him into a sweet humanitarian conception of God.

ASCH is a very good *raconteur*, and his novel has the effect of a well-told anecdote. Yet even at his best—in the flashbacks to Grossman's childhood on the East Side—everything seems to drift in a void. The East Side, a Connecticut town, Florida—all are static backdrops. Our final impression is one of extreme flatness and bareness: shadows floating through a cardboard world in absolute silence. This kind of atmosphere is nothing less than a marvel of incongruity in a novel about a crucial upheaval in a man's soul and the agony of a family conflict. *A Passage in the Night*, it will be noticed, has certain affinities with *Death of a Salesman*.

But this book is so obvious a failure that it would be pointless to dwell on its faults as a novel. As a document, however, it has its own kind of interest, being an unusually dignified expression of an important contemporary phenomenon—what we may call the interfaith temperament. There is nothing political about Asch's religiosity, nothing that smacks of public relations or promotion. It's based on the feeling that in an age of "materialism" (Asch's favorite

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word for describing the modern ethos) all theological distinctions pale beside the overwhelming necessity of faith—*any* faith, so long as it is truly and personally held. "It's hard to believe in God, but not to believe in Him is impossible." Asch never quite says that we all believe in the "same" God, but he apparently attributes differences in religious doctrine to biographical accidents. If you were born Jewish and you feel the need for God, then the best way to find him is through some form of Judaism—not because Judaism is the true religion, but because your psychological necessity will express itself through the religion of your father.

I call this attitude religiosity since it conceives the ultimate objective of the religious quest to be peace rather than truth. There was a time when men were asked to submit to Christianity (or Judaism) because Christianity provided a true account of reality; only the truth could make men free. Asch is not alone in showing himself indifferent to the question of religious truth, though he at least has the virtue of connecting his indifference with his own inability to know much about God: if I can't know, there isn't much point in troubling myself, Asch seems to be saying. But the interfaith temperament insults man by assuming that his need for "security" is greater than his need for truth. It is the theological face of that political cant which is always proclaiming that whereas we civilized people really care about liberty, the Asians are capable of caring only about their bellies.

The great ironic paradox is that the partisans of religion, who have lately been insisting that for the purposes of the cold war we need to recognize the religious sources of our democracy in order to guard against the relativism of democratic thought, should have become so relativistic about their own subject. Not only do they politely suppress theological distinctions for the sake of forming a popular front against "materialism," but they also persist in recommending faith in terms of expediency rather than truth: peace of soul and mind, cold-war tactics, world views for writing poetry—anything but truth. It's the old story of being corrupted by the enemy you struggle against most fiercely.

Asch is no exception to this rule. His view of the "materialism" wrecking our civilization is identical with the superficial ideology of those who want to reestablish the kind of orthodoxy he hates even more than he hates psychiatrists; his own case would have been strengthened if he had been willing to recognize how much more complex our "materialistic" spiritual life is than mere "getting and spending." In fighting what he thinks is a tendency in Freudianism to deny the reality of moral conflicts, he reveals an astonishing ignorance of psychoanalysis:

"Mr. Grossman [says Asch's mouthpiece, Rabbi Zimmerman] is a victim of 'the book.' . . . I mean, of the theory of the complexes into which doctors divide our various psychic sicknesses—like the 'father-complex,' the 'mother-complex,' the 'Hamlet-complex,' the 'Oedipus complex.' You've taken the patient and you've put him into a cage which was prepared for him beforehand. This time it's the 'guilt-complex.' Certainly there is a guilt-complex. But it's not a delusion. It is a reality, doctor, a factual thing which goes by the name

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of 'conscience.' Nobody dared to admit the possibility that Mr. Grossman had in fact committed that act, that error, which had to be corrected; such a possibility would have destroyed the 'complex' into which he was fitted, not only by the doctors but by his own son."

What real Freudian would refuse to take a moral conflict seriously because it can be "reduced" to a "guilt complex"? And can Freud be seriously accused of dismissing the fact of conscience?

ASCH'S theology, such as it is, exhibits the same confusions as his criticism of the modern ethos. He sees religion, as I have said, in psychological terms, in terms of need and peace; the mark of its truth is the extent to which it brings the right psychological results. This, of course, is a pragmatic interpretation, deriving from William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Once we have perceived the indebtedness of Asch and others to James, it becomes clear that the interfaith temperament was born of an alliance between theologians and that onetime most hated enemy of theology, Pragmatism. Priest and Pragmatist unite to defend the reality of spirit against crass utilitarian "realists" and Freudians. A more ill-fated alliance it would be difficult to conceive, unless it is the one between religion and Freudianism against Pragmatism.

Asch and others are like medicine men: their main argument seems to be that clergymen can do a better job than psychoanalysts. Does this mean that the validity of religion is to rest on whether it cures more patients than the analysts do? Theologians once asserted that they could do a better job of interpreting the world than philosophers, but in an age of science it becomes necessary for religion to parade its claims as applied science. One wonders when it will parade its claims as religion again.

Bevin of England

ERNEST BEVIN. By FRANCIS WILLIAMS. British Book Centre. 288 pp. $4.50.

Reviewed by T. R. FYVEL

WHEN writing a biography of the late Field Marshal von Hindenburg, whose name loomed so large during the 1914-18 war, John Wheeler-Bennett, the English historian, found a telling title phrase which once and for all delineated

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the character of that mustachioed German soldier—"The Wooden Titan."

There is a temptation to apply a similar epithet to Ernest Bevin. I well remember attending the press conference in 1946 where he announced the formation of the Anglo-American Palestine Enquiry Committee. Bevin rolled on to the platform, a squat, broad-shouldered, elderly figure, slightly incongruous in formal dress—it might have been any elderly English shopkeeper or trade union secretary. This was the time when he was already increasingly angered because events in Palestine were patently not moving his way. He began to speak, almost apologetically, about the terrible complexity of the Palestine problem. He turned for information to a Foreign Office official beside him, got some incorrect figures, and repeated them. He next added some incorrect statements of his own—I saw one or two journalists in the audience raise their eyebrows. Thumping the table, he suddenly launched into protestations of his own good will: he only wanted a fair solution, to help the homeless Jews, to raise Arab living standards. (His words had an odd lack of conviction.) Thumping the table even harder, he declaimed that he would not, however, be deflected from seeking a just solution by violence from any side: not by the Jews, and yes, as an afterthought, not by the Arabs, either. Again the words sounded hollow, confused, mechanical. I recall how in an article the next day I said that as a strong man Bevin was no more "than an old wooden man-of-war camouflaged as steel."

And yet, surely, this is not all. Mr. Williams has subtitled his biography, "Portrait of a Great Englishman." In his foreword Clement Attlee uses the word "great" on three occasions. And one must remember that when Bevin became Foreign Secretary he was sixty-four; when the Palestine conflict flared up he was nearly sixty-seven and a sick man—the powerful body and the ruthless will were tragically breaking up. The new study by Francis Williams, a prominent British newspaperman and former editor of the *Daily Herald,* is a journalistic chronicle which does no more than pose the problem of Bevin's power and personality; yet it does present the portrait of a most unusual, formidable, and in his way creative human being.

ERNEST BEVIN was born in 1881, the son of a West of England farm worker. The family background was Methodist; and, as has often been said, the British Labor movement has always owed more to Methodism than to Marxism. We see Bevin orphaned at the age of seven, taken from school at eleven, working as a farm boy for sixpence a week, becoming a truck driver—and so on. It is an interesting difference between the British and American outlooks that Bevin in later years was always bored by any attempts to describe his early "log cabin" days, not through misplaced snobbery—on the contrary—but because he thought them irrelevant to his real political career, which began when at the age of nearly thirty he became trade union organizer of the Bristol dockers and transport workers, and the secretary of the West of England Unemployed Committee. Those were days of British workers' militancy, as was the 1914-18 war, and here was the start of Bevin's career. It had, I think, five highlights.

First, the famous occasion in 1920 when Bevin, then the dynamic left-wing leader of the dockers, spoke up on behalf of six million British trade unionists with his dramatic threat of a national strike against British military in-

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tervention on the side of Poland against the Soviet Union. (It would have been intriguing to know what Bevin thought about this act in later years.) Next, in the inter-war years, Mr. Williams shows Bevin efficiently and ruthlessly building his own empire in the Transport and General Workers' Union—with its million and a quarter members, the largest or perhaps second largest union in the world. At the same time he was defending the outlook of the Labor movement against the intellectuals and ideologies he always mistrusted: against Ramsay MacDonald, whom he expelled in 1931, against George Lansbury, whose pacifism he brutally tore to shreds at the time of the Abyssinian sanctions crisis of 1935, and against Cripps and Bevan, whose expulsion from the party he helped to secure in 1936 for advocating a "United Front" with the hated Communists on the issue of the Spanish Civil War.

The next stage came in the summer of 1940. France was falling and the Germans were speeding towards the Channel, when Bevin, together with Attlee and Morrison, swung the Labor movement into unqualified alliance with Churchill. Bevin himself, as Minister of Labor, remained the undisputed chief figure on the British home front till the end of the war. In 1945 Bevin traveled to Potsdam as Prime Minister Attlee's Foreign Secretary. The next two years provided one of the most interesting phases of his career. Almost single-handedly, at a time when Secretary of State Byrnes was still given to illusions about Soviet intentions, Bevin resisted Soviet aggression in such places as Greece and Trieste. A climax of achievement came in 1947-48, when Bevin persuaded Secretary of State Marshall to take over the British military commitment in Greece, and when by his swift response to Marshall's announcement of financial aid to Europe he helped to lay the foundation for ERP and then NATO. True, in these transactions Bevin was at the receiving end, but his skill and patience in promoting Anglo-American collaboration cannot be gainsaid.

After this, in 1948-50, came anti-climax: the crass failure in Palestine, the repeated failure to achieve an Egyptian treaty, the pathetic clinging to office of a sick and weakening man. To the Palestine issue Mr. Williams, as if embarrassed, devotes only two sketchy and apologetic pages which hardly merit discussion. He repeats some naive fallacies: that it was

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only President Truman's hurried endorsement of 100,000 Jewish immigration certificates which destroyed the prospects of the Anglo-American Committee's report, as if Bevin had not rejected the report out of hand the moment he saw it; or that the *Yishuv* was led from New York. Astonishingly, Mr. Williams does not even mention the existence of the Jewish Agency, or the names of Weizmann or Ben Gurion. Instead, he engages in such airy fancies as that Bevin "had private meetings with British Jews. With them he was convinced he could have reached a settlement. Indeed, there was one point where he thought he had secured undertakings which would make one possible. But these were immediately repudiated without notice by the American Zionists who were now in control and who were determined on a complete break with Britain."

Palestine is evidently not Mr. Williams' subject. I do not, indeed, recall any articles by him on the Middle East. But in writing passages like the above, he clearly could not have looked back into the files even of his own "Bevinite" paper, the *Daily Herald*.

Still, where Mr. Williams can draw on fairly well-documented historical material, he gives a readable account of Bevin's life and political development. The latter especially is worth study, for in his ponderous way, with his readiness to collaborate with British or American "capitalists" combined with unshaken working class loyalty, Ernest Bevin did represent the inner spirit of the British Labor movement, that movement which foreign observers often fail to see clearly behind the pyrotechnics of British Socialist intellectuals, but which is always there, with its mixture of inertia and ability to change, of mistakes and good sense, and which is today slowly advancing—yes, towards what? But that is a question which Bevin in his later years as Foreign Secretary no longer seemed to envisage, and which Mr. Williams does not touch upon.

The Wreckers

APOSTLES OF DISCORD. By RALPH LORD ROY. BEACON. 374 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by JAMES RORTY

ABOUT a year ago, after the Slansky trial and the arrest in Moscow of the Jewish doctors, James H. Madole, director of the National Renaissance party, proposed that the United States should purge itself of Jews too.

"Then," said Madole, "Russia and America could come to terms and a world war would be averted."

Other "rightist" hate-mongers, reports Mr. Roy in *Apostles of Discord,* were equally if somewhat variously responsive to Moscow's initiative. Gerald Winrod's *Defender Magazine* declared that the whole affair was part of a Jewish scheme to get the United States into another world war. Conde McGinley's *Common Sense* predicted that "Eisenhower, with this guidance, will lead us into war against Russia to save the Jews behind the Iron Curtain. . . . If the Russian people wish to throw off their Jewish yoke, what right have we to criticize?"

On the whole, our ministers of hate could scarcely have behaved differently if they had been Communist agents. And, indeed, that is what some of them may turn out to be, like so many of their prototypes in other countries: West Germany's neo-Nazis, Argentina's Communo-Perónistas, Iran's Tudeh thugs and corrupt mullahs masquerading as nationalists.

In any case, Mr. Roy is certainly right in believing that these "apostles of discord" are among our worst national liabilities, in peace or in war. His book, the first comprehensive, careful, and genuinely enlightening survey of this half-mad, half-venal—and fortunately very small—underworld of American Protestantism, is the more creditable because it is the work of a young theological student, begun as a doctor's thesis.

MR. ROY classifies his specimens into two groups: the Ministry of Hate and the Ministry of Disruption. The first group is made up chiefly of racists who live by baiting Jews and Negroes, and of bigots who make a business of slandering Catholics. Among the more important figures in this group are Gerald L. K. Smith, Gerald Winrod, Joseph P. Kamp, E. N. Sanctuary, Elizabeth Dilling, Allen A. Zoll, Robert H. Williams, and C. Leon De Aryan, editor of *The Broom;* also Dr. John Beaty, professor of English at Southern Methodist University, whose students voted his *The Iron Curtain over America* "the worst book of 1952," and Howard B. Rand, editor of *Destiny* and chief promoter in this country of the strictly crackpot Kingdom Message of Anglo-Israelism.

A central figure in the second group is

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Carl MacIntire, president of the International Council of Christian Churches, editor of the weekly *Christian Beacon,* and pastor of the 1,600-member Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, New Jersey, just across the Delaware from Philadelphia. In 1936 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church expelled MacIntire for "causing dissension and strife, engendering suspicion and ill will, and seriously injuring the peace of the church." Since then this unfrocked fundamentalist has dedicated himself unsparingly to the destruction of the ecumenical movement as represented by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the World Council of Churches.

AMONG MacIntire's most active followers are the "Cowboy Evangelist," Harvey Springer of Englewood, Colorado, and J. Harold Smith, Tennessee's gift to American radio culture. I saw Springer perform in Knoxville, and had a long interview with Smith, then in trouble with the FCC, which subsequently kicked him off the air for cause. Both evangelists are greedy and cynical pitchmen as well as accomplished pulpit and radio buffoons. Mark Twain, during his years as a pilot, watched similar types working the Mississippi river towns a century ago, and immortalized them as the King and the Duke in *Huckleberry Finn.*

Here is a sample of J. Harold Smith in action against the ecumenical movement:

"The Federal Council is a Goliath of power, a wild Absalom of rebellion, a loathsome Judas of treachery, a deceiving Saphira of falsehood, a cruel Ahab of covetousness, a bold Belshazzar of pride, and a painted Jezebel of murder. . . . I ask you again, will we tolerate such? I say a thousand times, no, and again I say BY THE GRACE OF GOD, THEY SHALL BE EXTERMINATED!"

Reputable fundamentalists like John W. Bradbury, editor of the *Watchman-Examiner,* have not failed to point out that genuine fundamentalism has nothing in common with these "intolerant religionists of the vigilante spirit" who "have brought no intellectual, moral, or spiritual contribution to the exposition of eternal truth." On the other hand, MacIntire and other laborers in the vineyard of Protestant disruption have found a ready welcome in the camp of Merwin K. Hart, president of the National Economic Council, whom Mr. Roy characterizes—and not unfairly—as "a favorite of all the antidemocratic forces in the United States."

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEBREW HISTORY

By LOUIS WALLIS

Young people in college and high school have easy access to scholarly works on the history of non-Hebrew nations; but they are kept from knowing what scholarship has discovered about Hebrew history. This appalling cultural situation is the outcome of a hush-hush policy which permits the general public to carry in mind an artificial, fantastic idea of the Jewish historical background.

From Harvard University, the Chairman of the Semitic Department writes as follows to the author of this new book on Hebrew history for young people: "You have brilliantly clarified a very complex and often obscure situation. The conflict between Baalism and Yahwism, involving a struggle for social justice, and the conflict between Ephraim and Judah, are shown in your admirable summary to have been basic in Hebrew history. At the same time, the reader learns many a lesson of great value for solving the problems of our own day."

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IN PRACTICE, the Ministry of Hate and the Ministry of Disruption interpenetrate and cooperate in both religious controversy and politics. When General MacArthur's name was placed in nomination at the Chicago convention it was Allen A. Zoll who led his marching, stamping "Christian Nationalists" into the auditorium, and Don Lohbeck, right-hand man of Gerald L. K. Smith, who organized Christian Nationalist activities in Chicago during convention week. At the other end of the fascist-Communist spectrum it was Kenneth Leslie, editor of the pro-Communist magazine *The Protestant,* who was in the forefront of support for Henry Wallace when the latter announced his availability for the Presidency in January of 1948.

On the basis of Mr. Roy's evidence, however, one must conclude that it is not Leslie, but rather the astute Claude Williams, director of the People's Institute of Applied Religion, who should be considered Moscow's most effective mouthpiece in the Ministry of Disruption. During the war, Williams actually got himself

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appointed by the War Emergency Committee of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions as their industrial chaplain in Detroit where Gerald L. K. Smith was cultivating a fertile vineyard among the fundamentalist Kentuckians and Tennesseeans who had found work in the munitions plants. Apparently the Board's idea was to fight fire with fire. But when Williams' theology proved to be not only Marxist and pro-Communist, but also vigorously anti-Protestant, anti-Catholic, and in fact anti-religious, the Board fired him. Since then he has been roundly denounced both by anti-Communist labor leaders and by such liberal pacifists as John Haynes Holmes.

WHAT one uneasily looks for in this strange jungle of the Protestant underworld is some sign of an emerging leadership and program by which the totalitarian forces of the right and the left might unite, shouting the blasphemous shibboleths of a perverted and debased Christian gospel. One wonders, for example, what weird mixture of isolationism, chauvinism, racism, and economic anarchism will constitute the program of the Christian Nationalists in the Presidential election of 1956. Gerald L. K. Smith and other hate-mongers speak most highly of Senator McCarthy even though he is a Catholic; to date, however, the Senator has shown himself unresponsive to these endorsements.

Perhaps wisely, Mr. Roy does not indulge in predictions. But he does suggest that the "apostles of discord" whom he most fears—even more than Moscow's duped or perverted clerical instruments—are "the well-financed groups dedicated to the promotion of libertarianism [who] in place of the social ideals of Christianity would substitute the narrow dogma of extreme laissez-faireism."

But chances of success for such an approach among the mass of American Protestants are slight indeed. The fact is—and Mr. Roy is careful to remind his readers of it—that at least 95 per cent of American Protestantism consists of solid, mostly middle-class citizens, who, if they don't always love their Jewish, Negro, and Catholic neighbors as themselves, are at least decently tolerant, as well as too intelligent to allow themselves to be victimized by the apostles of discord.

Not only American Protestantism, but all of us are in Mr. Roy's debt for this careful and balanced study.

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Traveling Salesmen

TRAVELS IN JEWRY. By ISRAEL COHEN. Dutton. 372 pp. $5.00.

UNDER STRANGE SKIES. By HARRY SIMONHOFF. Philosophical Library. 349 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by MORRIS FREEDMAN

IT IS easy for the modern, freethinking Jew to lose whatever sense of Jewish continuity he may have. Often there is no reason, other than a kind of anthropological curiosity, itself not to be disparaged, to keep alive in him an awareness of his past in Europe or of his contemporaries everywhere. Whether the loss of this sense is good or bad or simply inevitable, it is not likely that either Mr. Cohen's or Mr. Simonhoff's work will make such a Jew regret the loss.

The chapter titles of Mr. Cohen's book promise a tour through some of the cities and towns the 20th-century immigrants to America left behind them. Cracow, Lvov, Czernovitz, Vilna, Kovno, Bialystok, Czenstochova. These are fabled places: they gave names in the new world to branches of fraternal organizations; they formed the magical references in discussions, arguments, and reminiscences of family circles; and Bialystok provided the designation for a uniquely rubbery roll, the "bialystoker," which rivals the bagel as a New York delicacy. Certainly it is interesting to go through these localities of one's parents with Mr. Cohen; it is a journey through the family album, even if we only get time-table statistics most of the time. One or two of Mr. Cohen's more detailed accounts, of a Sabbath service in Paris, of a Karaite community in Poland, are sharply vivid and charming in their dry detachment—which is maintained almost, but not quite, to the end: he concludes the first with an annoyed comment about the similarity of the French rabbi's and the French priest's garb, and the second with an irrelevant touch of Zionist propaganda.

But on the whole, Mr. Cohen uses his tour simply as the occasion for a series of lectures, pretty much on one note, on modern anti-Semitism and the fabulously widespread appeal of Zionism ("everybody is doing it, so why not you"), which finally leave us unmoved and uncomfortable. His reporting is controlled by a need to sell us something, and

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his role as salesman finally limits his observation. Indeed we would get little sense of the story-book characters and most of the story-book places without some of the wonderful photographs Mr. Cohen collected; the illustrations of the smiling street workers in Lvov, of the Kovno dandy in tight suit and homburg leaning insouciantly on a cane while consulting a bearded marriage broker, point up the failure of the text to handle life.

MR. SIMONHOFF carries Mr. Cohen's technique of making everything abstract to the point where we often get no notion at all of the places he visited. Many of his straightforward descriptions are good; he can be an alert, expressive, and uncommitted observer. But when he disembarks at a Spanish city, we get a history-book spiel on the Inquisition; he goes to England, and we are overwhelmed by an astonishingly intemperate attack on Ernest Bevin, in which the whole British Palestine policy is ascribed to the personal anti-Semitism of the Labor foreign secretary. For any country he passes through, we are edified with smug comments about how many prominent Jews there have been there, including half-Jews and former Jews. It is rather like those college alumni publications in which every activity of every alumnus is reported with equal enthusiasm. Mr. Cohen, though he expresses himself more subtly, is similarly chauvinistic.

Occasionally both writers adopt techniques made familiar by anti-Semites themselves. Of a former governor of Florida, David Sholtz, identified as a converted Jew, whose first name is always given as "Dave," Mr. Simonhoff writes: ". . . a minority held that a *meshumed* is not to be trusted. It became clear that Dave Sholtz was running true to type. Evidently the minority were right in their estimate of a renegade." He brings up the ugly idea that in all mixed marriages the Jewish partners sooner or later will "receive a rude jolt on hearing themselves reviled by anti-Jewish spouses or offspring." He tells us with unpleasant relish of Rabbi David Marx, whom he describes as "among the first to perceive that the tepid Reform Judaism of his time was concerned chiefly with the cultivation of good will among Christians," and who was the object of an attack by General George Van Horn Mosely. "Irony of Ironies! The climax of a lifetime! Patriotism is perhaps the rabbi's sincerest quality. His Americanism is probably deeper rooted and more profound than his Judaism. It is patriotic fervor that made Rabbi Marx a bitter enemy of Zionism and a member of the American Council for Judaism."

Mr. Cohen is far less guilty than Mr. Simonhoff of lapses into sheer bad taste. But even he refers to a monk who "sought to move the multitudes of London Jewry with his passionate appeals for the rebuilding of Zion, though his fervor would have been more fittingly, and perhaps more fruitfully spent, in launching a philippic against Christendom to Christianize itself."

PERHAPS more important than the instances of pure bias is the undercurrent that runs through both books, in Mr. Simonhoff's close to the surface, of completely taken-for-granted feeling that the inferior *goyim* have as their one function in existence the harassing of Jews. Every case of Jewish persecution or discrimination, obvious or dubious, is reported, often the gruesome details are smackingly lingered over, but never is there an attempt to understand on any but the most hackneyed and insubstantial grounds. Typical is Mr. Cohen's interpretation of an action of Lithuanian authorities: "They enacted a compulsory Sunday rest law in the alleged interest of the Christian Sabbath, but in the real interest of Christian commerce, for the Jewish tradespeople, who were thus compelled to rest two days a week . . . and consequently subjected to a tremendous handicap in the economic struggle." What has Mr. Cohen to say about American or British Sunday rest laws?

The profundity of Mr. Simonhoff's concept of anti-Semitism may be demonstrated by his glib "medical" description: "For ages, doctors have treated typhus or malaria without knowing the bacterial origin of these diseases. Some day science may also isolate the germ that causes anti-Semitism. The symptoms of Judeophobia are well known. A person of any race, nation, group, or sex is seized by undefinable hate. In milder cases, the patient is satisfied with name calling. The more advanced stage causes him to break out in violence. But the most dangerous manifestation takes the form of neurosis. Then like all monomaniacs, the psychotic loses his sense of reality."

Anyone who seeks to relate to the world without bigotry and cheap sentimentality must react to these books with despair. The Jew

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This *I Believe*

by Robert Redfield*

"TODAY WE have an immense Governmental enterprise . . . popularly known as the 'Voice of America.' . . . It is desirable that other people see the good about us that can give them reason to like and to help us. So we help them to see the good about us by telling them about it. We 'sell' the American way.

". . . But I do think our talking is insufficiently balanced by listening. I do not think that we listen enough to what other people are trying to say to us about themselves, and I do not think we listen enough to the sound of what we say in the ears of him to whom we say it. . . . Just because we think great combines moving over vast fields of wheat are proofs of what great fellows we are, we took it for granted that Chinese and Middle Eastern peasants would look at pictures of these combines and admire us. By just listening for a moment to the sound of our voices in their ears instead of in our own we could find out that the combines, the tiled bathrooms and the skyscrapers in most cases make those peasants feel more remote from us and more suspicious of us than they were before. . . .

"Freedom of speech is not just speaking; it is speaking honestly and as one thinks. Also, it is listening. No one is really free to use speech effectively unless other people listen, and no one has earned the freedom to talk to a listening audience unless he listens when another talks. The perception of both difference and likeness is a necessary basis for a conversation between two individuals or between two nations. To talk as free men each must in effect say: 'You have a different view from mine, but we are both reasonable and human creatures, and I should like to know what your view is.' . . . A vote won by a reasonable argument understood and accepted is also a mind grown stronger. . . .

"At home and abroad to talk and then to listen, to listen with the help of reason and then reasonably to talk, is to strengthen us just where we can be so much stronger than the Soviets. It is to build the community of free minds, 'the civilization of the dialogue.' "

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emerges here as a stupidly heroic figure in a paranoid dream, defending himself violently against both trivial and terrible onslaughts, many of them existing only in his fantasy. (Mr. Simonhoff is as funny as the Russians when he writes indignantly about the injustice done to Columbus, because he was a Jew, and to Jews in general, when America was named after an opportunistic *goy*.) The dull dogmatism, the specious arrogance, the maddening inconsistencies—are we to believe that these actually represent the way large numbers of Jews regard themselves and the world? Is it true that we cannot feel comfortable about what we are and what we are doing unless we prove ourselves, however tenuously, to be —and to be doing—something special, something indispensable and "better"? I trust not. The overweening pride exhibited in these two books has nothing in common with the serious, dignified pride of a dignified people; it belongs to the foolishness of Babbittry.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ is a member of the staff of the Library of Jewish Information of the American Jewish Committee.

NORMAN PODHORETZ is a graduate of Columbia University and of the College of Jewish Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has just returned to this country after spending three years at Cambridge University working towards his doctorate.

JAMES RORTY has made many significant journalistic contributions to the exposure of demagoguery and totalitarianism. His most recent contribution to COMMENTARY was "The Anti-Communism of Senator McCarthy" (August 1953).

T. R. FYVEL is a British writer who was for many years literary editor of the London *Tribune*.

MORRIS FREEDMAN, a member of the English department of the City College of New York, received his doctorate in English literature at Columbia University last June.

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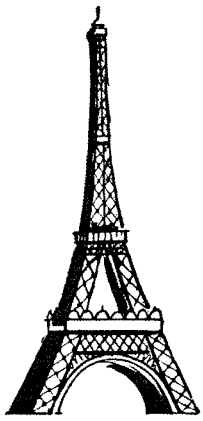

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